

**EDWIN ABBOTT ABBOTT**

**(1838-1926)**

**AS NEW TESTAMENT EXEGETE AND THEOLOGIAN**

**By**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Fourfold I</u>	<u>The Fourfold Gospel, Introduction. Diatessarica.</u> Part X, Section I.
<u>Fourfold II</u>	<u>The Fourfold Gospel, The Beginning. Diatessarica.</u> Part X, Section II.
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<u>Fourfold V.</u>	<u>The Fourfold Gospel, The Founding of the New</u> <u>Kingdom or Life Reached Through Death. Diatessarica.</u> Part X, Section V.
FLTS	<u>From Letter to Spirit</u>
K&H	<u>The Kernel and the Husk</u>
TNIC	<u>Through Nature to Christ</u>
TSOM	<u>The Son of Man</u>
SOTW	<u>The Spirit on the Waters</u>

## CHAPTER I

### ABBOTT'S LIFE

Edwin Abbott Abbott was born in London on December 20, 1838. His father, Edwin Abbott the headmaster of the Philological School, Marylebone, had some writings published including a concordance of Pope's works and a handbook on arithmetic and on English grammar.

In September, 1850, E. A. Abbott was sent to the City of London School and remained there until 1857, when he left as captain with a scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge. In 1861 he became Senior Classic and Senior Chancellor's Medallist, and W. S. Aldis Senior Wrangler and First Smith's Prizeman. He was elected a fellow of the college in 1862. Later he was made an honorary fellow of the College and a fellow of the British Academy.

Abbott married Mary Rangely, and they had two children, a son and daughter. In his later life the daughter acted as his secretary and enabled him to publish many of his books.

Abbott began his career as a teacher. For three years he served an apprenticeship at King Edward's School, Birmingham and at Clifton College. During this time he was also ordained in the Church of England. At 26 years of age he was appointed headmaster of the City of London School.<sup>1</sup> For twenty-four years he remained at this school and became

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<sup>1</sup>The Eagle, XLIV: 193-198, p. 326.

one of the acknowledged heads of his profession, and made his school famous at the Universities.

His reputation as Headmaster became so great that he could probably have had the Head Mastership of any school in England as it became vacant . . . . Jowett endeavoured to attract him to Balliol as a lecturer in Theology, and the Spectator demanded that he should be made a bishop while he was still in his early thirties. He<sup>1</sup> declined all offers and remained at his old School.

He preached as well as he taught but gave up preaching because of a "chronic delicacy of the throat, which rendered it imprudent for him to add to the strain which his school work necessarily imposed upon his voice."<sup>2</sup>

H. H. Asquith, who was to become Prime Minister, was one of Abbott's pupils. In later years in a speech Asquith paid this tribute to Abbott: "I am certain - and I say it deliberately and with full conviction - that there is no man living to whom I lie under the same debt of obligation."<sup>3</sup>

Abbott's early retirement from his teaching duties at fifty years of age, especially in view of his success at this work, was due to his desire to devote full time to his Biblical studies. His son and daughter explained that he retired because,

for many years he had wished to resign. His health was never good; he suffered from chest trouble and from violent weakening colds, and did not expect to see old age. This last fact in particular

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<sup>1</sup>A. E. Douglas-Smith, The City of London School, p. 433.

<sup>2</sup>The Eagle, op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>3</sup>Douglas-Smith, op. cit., p. 168.

explains the insistence of the call of the work beside which, to him, the rest of his career was only an incident.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott had earlier lamented that Francis Bacon did not finish his literary work due to the demands of other duties. In order to prevent the same thing happening to him, Abbott retired from public life and devoted himself to writing. Abbott commented concerning Bacon's philosophy, "One can hardly quit the subject without regretting that Bacon's deviation into the busy paths of office cut short his labours in philosophy."<sup>2</sup>

Besides his works listed in the Bibliography Abbott also wrote these:

- (1) 1870 - A Shakespearean Grammar
- (2) 1871 - English Lessons for English People  
(This was written with J. R. Seeley.)
- (3) 1872 - Bible Lessons
- (4) 1872 - The Good Voices, A Child's Guide to the Bible
- (5) 1872 - How to Write Clearly
- (6) 1872 - On Teaching the English Language
- (7) 1873 - Parables for Children
- (8) 1873 - Latin Prose Through English Idiom
- (9) 1874 - How to Tell the Parts of Speech
- (10) 1875 - "Preface" to Pope (Alexander) the Poet -  
A Concordance to the Works of Alexander  
Pope by Edwin Abbott
- (11) 1875 - How to Parse

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Bacon's Essays, Vol. I, p. xcv.

- (12) 1880, 1881, - On the Teaching of Latin
- (13) 1883 - On the Teaching of Latin Verse Composition
- (14) 1883 - Hints on Home Teaching
- (15) 1889 - The Latin Gate
- (16) 1893 - Dux Latinus
- (17) 1926 - Flatland, third revised edition

Abbott's fears of an early death were not well founded for he was 87 years old when he died on October 12, 1926. He was an active writer for almost all his later life except for the last seven years when he was bedridden.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Times, October 13, 1926. His last theological work, The Fourfold Gospel, Section V was published in 1917.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BACKGROUND OF ABBOTT'S NEW TESTAMENT THOUGHT

In this chapter the different intellectual forces with which Abbott came in contact will demand our attention. We shall see that he was awake to many of the forces that were moulding contemporary intellectual opinions. His reaction to these is sometimes one of opposition; sometimes one of assimilation into his thought by a remoulding process; sometimes one of adoption.

This chapter should give us a perspective of our subject. It will give us the background out of which Abbott's thought arose. It will help us to understand what problems Abbott faced and why he thought as he did in trying to meet them. We shall be concerned with four areas of thought: Philosophy, which is divided into Epistemology and Reality; Ecclesiastical Parties; Biblical Studies; and Bacon and Abbott.

#### I. Philosophy

##### Epistemology

Throughout his works Abbott maintained the proposition that we come to the truth only through illusions. The world, Abbott says, ". . . in respect of illusions, is all of a piece, all bearing traces of one consistent handiwork, developing, through illusion, truth."<sup>1</sup> Mankind is subjected to illusion by God and Nature. "Time and illusion

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, TNTC, p. 82.

seem to be as natural elements in God's spiritual training of mankind as they are in Nature's training of the senses."<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere itself refracts the light rays, and we cannot trust the air to present objects to our sight in a correct way. From this he argues,

If then the different layers of our atmosphere, our medium of sight, have been so ordained by God that they shall always reveal to us the truth, yet leave part of the truth distorted or unrevealed, how is it unlikely that God may likewise have so constructed the several strata of the medium of His spiritual revelation that the truth might be always more or less refracted and concealed, thus mercifully making us ever discontented with our medium of knowledge . . .<sup>2</sup>

In a manner which we shall find is characteristic of Abbott, the term, "illusion", is given a special connotation by him. This word is defined by a dictionary as "something that deceives the eye or mind; a mistaken perception or belief."<sup>3</sup> There is no indication that illusion leads to absolute knowledge in this definition of it, but Abbott expressly states that it does prepare us for this. Illusions are defined as "mental affirmations not harmonizing with immediate experience, but preparatory for absolute knowledge."<sup>4</sup> It is this coloring of the term which peculiarly distinguishes the conception of "illusion" in Abbott's writings.

So far we have dealt only with Abbott's earlier work, Through Nature to Christ. In this book he seeks truth through illusion by various means. At one place he intimates we may correct our sight

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 74

<sup>3</sup>The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary, eds.: Albert and Loy Morehead.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, K & H, p. 375.

by the aid of Reason and our interpretation of Revelation by the aid of conscience.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge shall be found by those who have "patience, discrimination and reason."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, throughout this work, Abbott seems to maintain that the illusions included in the Revelations of the Family, the State, Nature and the Dead were "superseded" by Christ so that Christ Himself became "a new and true world to mankind."<sup>3</sup> It would seem that the authority of Christ dispels the illusions in these Revelations and gives us the truth contained in them.

Abbott approaches the account of Christ in the Gospels in a rationalistic and critical manner as we shall see;<sup>4</sup> yet, the authority of Christ is recognised. Another non-rational principle Abbott extols is faith and hope.<sup>5</sup> In his opinion,

The logic of the family is not the logic of the laboratory or of the dissecting-room; and if the universe is not a laboratory nor a dissecting-room but a family, may it not be well that, whenever we attempt to approach Him, the Heavenly Father requires us to study a different grammar of assent from that which serves to master the secrets of science . . . . In a word, sanguineness and hopefulness, duly controlled, appear to me moral virtues, ultimately leading (even though it is through illusion), to true intellectual conclusions.<sup>6</sup>

He could even say "Faith in Christ appears to me to be not a demonstrable matter, like the Pons Asinorum, but the product of a life of effort,

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<sup>1</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 221. Abbott, at this time, was writing against those philosophers who insisted Christ was "nothing but the real or ideal Founder of Christianity" and that He did nothing, while His disciples did everything. (Ibid., pp. 155-6.)

<sup>4</sup>See the section on Biblical Studies in this chapter.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 15



and the result of many influences" - parents, school, society, church, memory of the dead, public prayer, hope of immortality, reading Scriptures, self-denying and philanthropic labour.<sup>1</sup> This outlook is similar to that found later in William James, the Pragmatist, who argued ". . . in line with Pascal's wager, that 'we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will', i.e., if it is not resolvable intellectually."<sup>2</sup> Abbott's adherence in his own way to the Pragmatist's approach to truth is much more manifest in The Kernel and the Husk published in 1886 where he frequently asks of a proposition, "Does it work?", than in his earlier work, Through Nature to Christ, published in 1877, where this question is actually never asked.

The Kernel and the Husk was written some years after a series of articles by C. S. Pierce in the Popular Science Monthly in 1878, which is considered to have brought in the modern era of Pragmatism,<sup>3</sup> while Through Nature to Christ was published a year before Pierce's articles. In Abbott, the pragmatic test as a means of obtaining truth is mingled with other methods and principles. He indicates his approach when he says, "It is only after a course, and sometimes a very long course of experience and experiment, that the child, or perhaps the man, eliminates with the aid of Reason those ideas which will not work, and confirms those that will work. . ."<sup>4</sup> Here we are brought face to face

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12

<sup>2</sup>Dictionary of Philosophy, ed. Dagobert D. Runes. p. 246.

<sup>3</sup>H. Heath Bawden, The Principles of Pragmatism, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 49.

with Abbott's policy of using a multiple of principles for the attainment of truth, even experience together with reason. This practice sometimes makes his work vague and difficult to understand. He still maintains that we are led through illusion to truth, and it is clearer here that the illusions are caused by the Imagination.

The faculty of the Imagination is "illusive", Abbott claims, but "It constructs the hypotheses, as well as the illusions, which, when tested by experience, guide us towards Knowledge." It makes "new existences and unities" out of "old fragments",<sup>1</sup> and

. . . attention impresses upon us the present; Memory recalls the past; but the Imagination is never content simply to reproduce the past or present. It sums up the past of memory (sometimes perhaps also the present of Attention) and combines it with a conjectured future in such a way as to produce a whole. It is always seeking for likenesses, orderly connections, regular sequences, beautiful relations, suggestions of unity in some shape or other, so as to reduce many things into one and to obtain a satisfying picture.<sup>2</sup>

Imagination by itself leads to error as it lacks critical discrimination.

Its business is to find likenesses and connections and to suggest explanations, not to point out differences, and make distinctions, and test explanations: these latter tasks are to be accomplished not by Imagination but by Reason with the aid of enlarged experience.<sup>3</sup>

It is the Imagination that suggests to the child that thunder is caused by the rolling of barrels above due to his belief that the world is according to one pattern. This is "a profound general truth, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 47

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

particular shapes which it assumes are often erroneous." It takes a long time of experiment and experience together with the aid of Reason before the child approaches truth.<sup>1</sup> "None the less, if the Imagination did not first suggest the ideas on which the Reason is to operate, we should never obtain anything worth calling knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Carlyle made a point of the fact that the Imagination cannot be trusted and distinguished it from our "logical faculty": "Not our Logical, Mensurative faculty, but our Imaginative one is King over us; I might say Priest and Prophet to lead us heavenward; our magician and wizard to lead us hellward."<sup>3</sup> Carlyle was, to a great extent, dependent on Coleridge for his philosophical views;<sup>4</sup> and both of these thinkers taught that man might trust in Reason.<sup>5</sup> At the same time they were opposed to the Rationalism of the Age of Reason. Reason during the Age of Reason was the supreme authority: "Its dictates were certain, infallible, and universal, and were tacitly identified with the Will of God. In religion reason . . . as a guiding principle was sufficient in itself."<sup>6</sup>

It was Coleridge who introduced into England the rationale against trust in universal reason in his adaptation of the Kantian and essentially Romantic distinction between the reason and the understanding.<sup>7</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Carlyle, Sartar Resartus, p. 178.

<sup>4</sup>It is said that Carlyle's two sources of German thought were Madame de Staël and Coleridge. (Sanders, Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement, p. 165.)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>6</sup>Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, p. 198.

<sup>7</sup>S. T. Coleridge, Aids to Reflection, p. 4.

Coleridge "Reason is . . . the Source and Substance of Truths above Sense, and having their evidence in themselves."<sup>1</sup> However, judgments of the Understanding "are binding only in relation to the objects of our Senses . . . ."<sup>2</sup> The Understanding reflects and generalizes concerning the things which are furnished it for comparison by the Senses.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott's terminology is confusing to one who has studied Coleridge or Kant. It is apparent that he does not use Reason in the same sense as it was used in the Age of Reason, but he is working with a view of Reason that is rather uniquely his own. In his own words he asserts that Reason is used ". . . in a sense for which Coleridge (I believe) preferred to use 'understanding'."<sup>4</sup> As we read Abbott, we wish he would give us a clearer statement of what he means by his terms. This, so far as I can tell, is the only place where he compares the meaning he attaches to "Reason" with the meaning given by any other thinker; and even here he leaves his term in a shroud of vagueness. Then in a confusing and indefinite statement, he says, "Perhaps some might give the name of 'higher Reason' to what I call Imagination."<sup>5</sup> Surely we need a clearer statement of the meaning that he attaches to his terms as compared to what meaning others attached to the same terms.

For Abbott, Reason is not a power operative of and by itself with the ability of reaching independent conclusions, or so it would seem,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 197, 201.

<sup>4</sup>KSH, op. cit., p. 47, f.n. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

both from his definition above and from other of his statements. He declares that Reason is "the power by which we compare, and, from our comparison, draw inferences or conclusions."<sup>1</sup> To compare we must have things to compare. Such material is furnished by the Imagination and Experience. He says it is by means of Reason that "we compare the suggestions of the Imagination with the suggestions of Experience, and accept or reject the former in accordance with the result of our comparison."<sup>2</sup> Thus, while Abbott gives some credence to Reason, he does not accept it as the faculty that will lead to ultimate Reality by itself, or so it would seem. For this he depends on Faith. "Absolute reality", he declares, "cannot be comprehended by men, and can only be apprehended as God or in God by a combination of Desire and Imagination to which we give the name of Faith."<sup>3</sup> This declaration is not very clear especially if we take seriously his statement that the Imagination is "illusive". We would be foolish to trust our apprehension of absolute reality thus understood. But it should be noted that here, too, Abbott does not allow Reason a determinative place in the calculation of absolute reality. Furthermore he does not seem to believe we can attain to a knowledge of what might be called the "thing in itself" of phenomena. On this he says, "Among objects of sensation those are (relatively) real which present similar sensations in similar circumstances."<sup>4</sup> The dictates of Reason alone are not allowed here either.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 369

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Reason, in Abbott's opinion, has its limitations which should be recognised. He gives the challenge:

Follow out the conclusions of your Reason in every instance and presently acknowledge that you are led, in some cases, to results so absurd and impractical that you must infer Reason to be out of its province in these cases. Reason your utmost for example about a first cause and Predestination and the Origin of Evil and the like; but then when you have come to the conclusion that, logically speaking, it is equally absurd to suppose that the world had no cause, and that the First Cause had no cause, give the subject up as being beyond the syllogistic powers.<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, he does not believe that we can depend on Reason to give us substantial knowledge of the First Cause. Throughout his works he labours to defend his belief that Reason should be used to determine the historical validity of the Bible. Here in the context with the previous quotation he states the place he assigns to Reason in our study of the Bible. He declared,

Wherever historical facts are affirmed in religion, . . . the accounts of those facts are to be judged upon evidence and by Reason alone; here Faith and Hope have no place; history in the New Testament is to be judged like history in Thucydides.<sup>2</sup>

Here he assigns to Reason the power to decide about the historical facts of the Bible. This is somewhat inconsistent with his statement that some things such as the First Cause are beyond the powers of Reason, especially since the history of the Bible deals with matters such as the First Cause; and, since it does, it is not completely analogous to a history about other matters. It would seem that if Abbott were consistent he would have to give a place to faith and hope when dealing with the history of the acts of God who, he declared, was apprehended

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

by Faith.<sup>1</sup> He infers that Reason is out of its province when it tries to deal with such questions as the First Cause. Yet we must point out that he makes some suggestions that sound very much like the products of the rationalistic philosophical idealists.

At one place he says,

. . . sometimes, when I try to conceive of the causes of terrestrial thoughts, and emotions, and spiritual movements, I find myself recurring to the antique notion, hinted at in one or two passages of the Bible and I believe encouraged by some of the old Rabbis that there are two worlds; one visible, terrestrial, and material; and the other invisible, celestial, and spiritual; and that whatsoever takes place down here takes place first (or simultaneously but causatively) up there; here, the mere outsides of things; there, the Causes and springs of action, the bodies down on earth, the spirits up in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott gives this not as a conviction but as a "harmless fancy".<sup>3</sup> This hypothesis, however, steps beyond "understanding" and beyond the sensible and indicates Abbott (inconsistent with the above definitions) uses Reason<sup>4</sup> not to compare only, but to originate and to speculate regarding ultimate reality. It is difficult to see how this speculation could be attributed to any faculty, even on Abbott's own definition, but to that faculty of which Coleridge spoke under the term "Reason". Abbott has said that the Imagination presents suggestions which Reason compares with the suggestions of Experience and either accepts or rejects the suggestions of the Imagination as a result. But he has also said that Reason, as he defined it, was "understanding". If this is true, then the suggestions above regarding absolute reality would be beyond

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 259.



"understanding"; and this faculty would be powerless to compare the results of the Imagination with those of experience.<sup>1</sup> It seems that what he says here on ultimate reality must be attributed to the (speculative) Reason regardless of what Abbott would call it.

Again he declares that he does not know that "I think" and that it is not the great world-spirit who thinks in him as well as reigns outside him. This sounds very much like the contention that each mind is only a phase of the Romantic philosopher's Absolute Self and our thinking only a phase of the thinking of the Absolute Self.<sup>2</sup> That Abbott wished to maintain something of a view like this can be seen in the fact that he returned to it on other occasions. He says:

To one who believes that the spirits of men are in constant communion with the all-sustaining Spirit of the Creator, the thoughts of men may well seem to be as dependent upon their divine origin as the air in my little room is at this moment dependent upon the changes of the circumambient atmosphere.<sup>3</sup>

He postulates further,

... . our spirits, or our angels - to use the language of metaphor - are not on earth: they sit together in heaven, that is to say in the heart of God; and whenever one of us can conceive a genuinely unselfish wish for a brother spirit and wing it with faith so that it flies to heaven . . . then it not only brings back a blessing upon the wisher but also thrills through the spiritual assembly above and comes back as a special blessing to the person prayed for.

The fluctuations of human thought and will may sometimes proceed from God without the intervention of material causes, "in virtue of the

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<sup>1</sup>Above in reference to p. 314, K & H.

<sup>2</sup>G. H. Mead, Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



existence of some invisible law of union by which the souls of men are united to God and to one another."<sup>1</sup>

What more need be said? Abbott speculates about absolute causality in a manner that indicates the use of a Reason that is more than mere understanding. We have previously noticed Abbott's habit of giving words a meaning all his own in his writings. In the case of "Reason" he limited its meaning to understanding in a vague definition. At the same time he defined Imagination as "higher reason". In practice, however, he appears to use his Reason in a Coleridgean sense regardless of whether he would term the faculty so used as "Reason", "Imagination", or whatever else.

Realizing Abbott's tendency to use words and ideas with his own meanings attached to them, we have reason to pause and examine his meanings when he asks of a proposition, "Does it work?" In his "youthful days" Abbott renounced Predestination on the grounds that it was impractical, and he decided to go about his work as though it did not exist.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, even at this point in his life, he was willing to judge the truth of a proposition by its practical consequences; by its value for future actions. We could even say he maintained a rudimentary Pragmatism before the appearance of this school of thought in modern times. In his theory of knowledge, Abbott frequently indicates that the test of a proposition's truthfulness lies in its ability to work. He was concerned with the value of truth, and he realized truth must look to the future. We could even say, ". . . all knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 282

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

of any practical value has to do with a future, immediate or remote; and therefore I do not think I shall be exaggerating in saying that for all knowledge about things outside us we depend largely upon Imagination and faith."<sup>1</sup> Ideas such as force, cause, effect, necessity, and "I" are the results of the Imagination and faith, although they are produced by the aid of experience and reason.<sup>2</sup> Abbott's refusal to limit himself either to experience, or reason, or faith, or Imagination and his decision to use all these principles in his search for truth beclouds his "pragmatism". When he asks does a proposition work, he is not concerned only with its utility for the present and the future, he is also concerned about its relation to the "invisible environment of eternal spiritual truth."<sup>3</sup> Pragmatism maintains that

the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verifi-cation. Its validity is the process of its validation."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, in his maintenance of valid eternal truth Abbott deviates from the spirit of Pragmatism. For him, truth comes to us enshrouded with integuments of illusion. We remove these illusions and we attain truth which "works"; but this truth is eternal, and Abbott does not appear to hold that it grows "from situation to situation" although our apprehension of it may grow. Abbott is not a thorough Pragmatist,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>TWNC, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>William James, Pragmatism, p. 201.

but he is one only in a peculiar sense. He has adopted Pragmatism into his own rather independent system of thought.

Yet Abbott uses his will to believe in God in a manner that anticipates the position of William James which is found in the latter's Will to Believe.<sup>1</sup> According to Abbott,

Mere force of logical proof or personal observation can convince no one that there is a God or that Jesus is the eternal Son of God; such a conviction can only come from a leaping out of the human spirit to meet the Spirit of God; and hence St. Paul tells us that "no man can say" - that is, "say sincerely" - "that Jesus is the Lord save by the Spirit." Here, therefore, in this region of the indemonstratable I can honestly use an effort of the will to ally myself with the spirit of faith. "I will pray to God; I will cling to God; will refuse to doubt of God; refuse to listen to doubts about God (except so far as may be needful to do it, in order to lighten the doubts of others, and then only as a painful duty, to be gone through with all speed); I am determined (so help me God) to believe in God to the end of my days: " . . . in resolving thus I am not acting insincerely nor shutting my eyes to the truth, but taking nature's appointed means for reaching and holding fast the highest spiritual truth."<sup>2</sup>

He will not apply this principle further to the problem of the validity of the Gospel miracles. On this matter he declares that he will not use his will to believe them because

God has given me other means - such as history, experience, and evidence - for arriving at the truth. Nor does a belief in the super-natural in the least imply a belief in the miraculous also. I may believe that God is continually supporting and impelling on its path every created thing; but I may also believe that there is not evidence to prove that His support and impulsion have

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<sup>1</sup>James declared, "Intellectualism's proclamation that our good-will our 'will to believe', is a pure disturber of truth, is itself an act of faith of the most arbitrary kind." Therefore he held that faith "remains as one of the inalienable birth-rights of our mind."

William James, Some Problems of Philosophy, pp. 224, 225.

<sup>2</sup>KSH, op. cit., p. 70.

ever been manifested save in accordance with that orderly sequence we call Law.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott preferred to argue from experience, and he approached metaphysical problems with trepidation. "I do not object," he declared,

. . . to the argument from "antecedent probability" where you can appeal to experience and argue from what happened in the past to what is likely to happen in the future. But where you can have no such evidence (because the Son of God was not twice incarnate); where the question is, "Did Jesus do this or did He not?" and where we have history and evidence to guide us, as to what he did and said; it seems to me we ought to be guided by evidence and not by "antecedent probabilities" especially when these "probabilities" are derived from nothing but meta-physical considerations.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott had an affinity rather for facts, the validity of which, he maintained. But facts for him since they have their basis in God were

not the "brute facts" of the Positivists. He affirmed,

. . . Christian faith regards the material world in all its stages as being gradually conformed by the Eternal Word of God to the Eternal Will. Hence, we are bound to a devout recognition of all truth of fact, historical or pre-historical. Facts are revelations from God about the divine Will and the processes of the divine Word fulfilling that Will. Whosoever misrepresents facts, misrepresents God.<sup>3</sup>

He was willing to act like a "true Positivist", but he strongly opposed their disregard of Jesus as fact.<sup>4</sup>

It is important that we keep in mind his basic differences with Positivism especially when we come across such statements as the following in his works:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>SOTW, op. cit., pp. 58-9.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 346.

Feeling . . . with Mr. Harrison the absolute need of some 'real power to revere', some ever-present goodness to love, some faith which can explain and guide my life, I am naturally drawn to worship this Life of humanity, this ever-present Power of progress, this Spirit of self-helpful love, this Word of God, which to me is represented by the Spirit of Christ. I appeal, then, in like manner to those who may feel that they cannot accept in their entirety the tenets of the Church of England, to pause at least before they reject the clear and unmistakeable evidence which points out Christ as 'a real power to revere, and an ever-present goodness to love.' Let them not shrink from the charge of adopting a Christian Positivism, if it is to be so called: provided that it is a real, uncontroversial, unwavering, satisfying heart-shaping worship, loyalty to Christ will be far better -- called by whatever name --<sup>1</sup> than many current forms of mere dogmatic Christianity.

Is there really any harm in telling people to become "Christian Positivists"? There seems to be a very real harm intellectually and possibly morally, but this former point concerns us most just now in our discussion of Abbott's epistemology. The result in Abbott is the slurring over of real differences of thought by obscuring these differences rather than finding any deep and lasting mutual ground as a basis for the combination of two opposing ways of thought. It is noteworthy that Mr. Harrison seeks to revere a power while Abbott seeks a Power. Harrison declared, "Divinities, and Absolute Goodnesses, and absolute Powers have ended for us. The relative goodness and power of our race remains a solid reality."<sup>2</sup> Abbott seeks a transcendental Power working immanently while Mr. Harrison seeks a power that is not transcendental. To ignore this and to seek to combine these principles of thought leads to confusion, and it fails to make clearcut distinctions where they should actually be made. We might be able to say Positivism, when it sought

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<sup>1</sup>TNTC, op. cit., pp. 24-5.

<sup>2</sup>Harrison, "Agnostic Metaphysics", The Insuppressible Book, ed. Gail Hamilton, p. 125.

for a religion of Humanity, was on its way back to the faith in Christ that it had previously given up; but it certainly had not arrived at belief in the Christ of Revelation. Abbott omits to mention this fact and suggests that one accept the somewhat incongruous position of a Christian Positivist.

The practice of using words and terms in a peculiar sense, similar to his use of "Positivist" above, is characteristic of Abbott's works. This might not be objectionable in itself, since the same word often has various shades of meaning. But if one decides to use an important or key term in a unique sense, he owes it to his readers to define clearly that term in relation to the sense given it by other scholars if he wants to avoid vagueness in his work and confusion in the mind of those who read it. Also, once his own peculiar meaning is given to a term he should be duty bound to use the word only in the sense he has defined it, or, if he wishes to use it otherwise, he should make a note of this fact. Although Abbott uses terms with a singular meaning attached to them, he fails to give us clarity and consistency of thought because he fails to do the above things.

Obviously Abbott's aim was to show how existing schools of thought could be so defined and manipulated as to be compatible (in the sense Abbott gave them) with Christianity (in the form he recognised). Abbott's age knew the existence of Agnosticism, Positivism, Hegelian Idealism, and modern Pragmatism. All of these deviated from Orthodox Christianity in some way. Abbott attempted to find a way of winning them for Christ. He did not believe in the recorded miracles in the Bible; these could be given up as not being essential to Christianity. He also gave his definitions of terms a broad and a vague sense so they could be used



with a variety of meanings attached to them. In this way he could show that those who thought they opposed Christianity were in fact more at one with it than they realised, if they would only stop to consider the wide meaning that could be attached to the very terms they used. By this same method he could give intellectual help to those within the church who might be tempted to give up their faith in Christ due to the influence of the current philosophies.

In this approach there is something that is commendable. Abbott may have gained an audience when more orthodox theologians would not have. He may have made those alienated from Christianity re-think their position and in so doing they may have been led to faith in Christ. But, in all probability, Abbott's works would have been the initiative force only in a person's move to faith, both because Abbott's Christianity is "non-miraculous", and because his philosophy, due to its inconsistencies, would probably not satisfy one's intellectual needs for very long. On the other hand, it is highly probable that those he was seeking to win would be offended at the first by his vagueness and inconsistency and, because of this, they may have discounted his arguments as so much theological special pleading. This was the real danger his approach entailed in regard to those who were engulfed in the current philosophies. Thus, viewed from all angles, his method in epistemology was liable to deprive him of securing his aim of winning men to Christ.

At any rate, although Abbott's thought was sceptical up to a point, he refused to go beyond a certain point in his scepticism. He refused to give up metaphysical speculations although he doubted that a human was capable of dealing with them. He also refused to go beyond a certain point in faith. He sought to avoid both the bleakness of scepticism and

what he considered were the errors of faith. Obviously his aim was to win the thoughtful people of his day to what he appears to have considered was essential Christian belief. In so far as he could combine the dictates of the current philosophies with his essential or minimum Christianity, he did so. In so far as he could take from orthodox Christianity without thereby destroying his minimum Christianity, he did so. Abbott's position in all his works was this via media position between Christianity and philosophy. We have seen that this is true in his epistemology, and we shall see that this is true in his philosophy of reality as well.

### Reality

About the middle of the nineteenth century the problem of Reality was pushed to the foreground from many sides.

A multitude of ideas was floating about in the philosophical atmosphere. They were largely remnants of the idealism which pervaded the earlier systems as well as the classical and romantic literature of the first third of the century; they were partly also new suggestions coming from the recently cultivated and prolific fields of the natural and the historical sciences, and they were lastly in no small degree revivals or reminiscences of the philosophies of bygone ages, notably of Plato, Spinoza, and Leibniz. The systematic unity, however, of these ideas had been broken up, they existed as scattered fragments of an edifice which had fallen, but which it was the duty of the philosophical mind to reconstruct on broader and safer foundations and with more careful workmanship.<sup>1</sup>

One doctrine of Reality which was put forward in the latter half of the nineteenth century was materialism. Although claiming new and higher

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<sup>1</sup>John T. Merz, A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century. Vol. III, p. 561.



methods of investigation, it had no more valid or satisfactory theories than those of the earlier materialists such as Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius.<sup>1</sup> This theory may be defined thus:

. . . a belief that only matter is existent or real; that matter is the primordial or fundamental constituent of the universe; that the universe is not governed by intelligence, purpose, or final causes; that everything is strictly caused by material (inanimate, non-mental, having certain elementary physical powers) processes or entities; that mental entities, processes, or events (though existent) are caused solely by material entities, processes, or events and themselves have no causal effect; that nothing supernatural exists; that nothing mental exists.<sup>2</sup>

It is "the doctrine that separates Nature from God, subordinates Spirit to matter, and sets up unchangeable law as supreme."<sup>3</sup>

There were a good number of declared materialists in the last half of the nineteenth century,<sup>4</sup> there were many more such as Herbert Spencer,<sup>5</sup> who were closely allied with this way of thinking who did much to propagate it. Many factors contributed to the popularity of materialism. In Germany it was "prompted as much by the admiration of the new science as by dismay at the apparent fruitlessness of the older philosophy of nature."<sup>6</sup> In England, while forces of materialism were on the ascendancy, the great wave of spiritualistic or idealistic thought of the earlier part of the century was receding and decreasing.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Tulloch, Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion, pp. 143-4.

<sup>2</sup>Runes, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>3</sup>James Ward, Naturalism and Agnosticism, Vol. II, p. 186.

<sup>4</sup>For a list of such thinkers both in Germany and England see Robert Flint, Anti-Theistic Theories, pp. 100-1, 479, 481.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>6</sup>Merz, op. cit., p. 561.

<sup>7</sup>Flint, op. cit., p. 99.

John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, both of whom advocated naturalism, were the first British Philosophers, after Berkeley, to take up the problem of Reality independently of the solutions contained in the doctrines of the Christian Church on the one side, and in the Metaphysics of the Continent on the other.<sup>1</sup> John Stuart Mill was a phenomenalist and empiricist. He held in common with M. Comte, in Comte's Cours de Philosophie Positive, that ultimate Cause is completely beyond man's ability to discern. He declared,

I most fully agree with M. Comte that ultimate, or, in the phraseology of metaphysicians, efficient causes, which are conceived as not being phenomena, nor perceptible by the senses at all, are radically inaccessible to the human faculties: and that the 'constant relations of succession or of similarity' which exist among phenomena themselves, (not forgetting, so far as any constancy can be traced, their relations of coexistence)<sup>2</sup> are the only subjects of rational investigation.

Accordingly, he concerns himself not with efficient cause but with physical causes alone.<sup>3</sup> His Law of Universal Causation "is but the familiar truth, that invariability of succession is found by observation to obtain between every fact in nature and some other fact which has preceded it . . .". For him there is "an invariable order of succession" between the phenomena which exist at any instant and the phenomena which exist at the succeeding instant.<sup>4</sup> This philosophy eliminates free will in man.<sup>5</sup> Above the derivative laws are the ultimate laws which man could discover and which he was approaching "nearer".<sup>6</sup> Laws of Nature were

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<sup>1</sup>Merz, III, op. cit., p. 511.

<sup>2</sup>J.S. Mill, A System of Logic, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 521.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 286f.

held, therefore, to be supreme. Determinism with no possibility of supernatural interference of any kind was the result. Mill's was a philosophy of avowed empiricism; he called Metaphysics, "that fertile field of delusion propagated by language. . .".<sup>1</sup>

Herbert Spencer, who in part was influenced by Mill,<sup>2</sup> gave us the most ambitious system of pure naturalism of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Through Huxley's writings this philosophy gained much acceptance.<sup>4</sup> In Spencer's hands the theory of evolution became an ally of materialism. He stated that ". . . matter is known to us only through its manifestation of Force . . . ."<sup>5</sup> and that ". . . the phenomena of Evolution have to be deduced from the Persistence of Force."<sup>6</sup> He also held that Matter and Motion everywhere produce the same traits whether in celestial bodies, organisms, or societies.<sup>7</sup> He manifested scepticism throughout his works. His position was that "the reality existing behind all appearances is, and must ever be, unknown."<sup>8</sup> Thus, he prepared the way for Huxley's word, 'agnosticism'.

It is obvious that Spencer is not a materialist since he held that matter was a symbol of unknown reality. Opponents, however, had some grounds in their contention that his philosophy is only a disguised materialistic (hylozistic) Pantheism if the supreme principle is nothing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Among others who influenced him were Hamilton and Mansel.

<sup>3</sup>Clement C. J. Webb, A Study of Religious Thought in England from 1850, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Merz, III, op. cit., p. 511.

<sup>5</sup>Herbert Spencer, First Principles, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 395.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 80.

but force manifesting itself in various motions.<sup>1</sup> Spencer, however, wished to attain to something higher. He declared that the laws of thought prevented us from "ridding ourselves of the consciousness of absolute existence; this consciousness being . . . the obverse of our self-consciousness."<sup>2</sup> But to make the inference from this that the Absolute is not to be conceived as physical force but as universal Consciousness, (a spiritual self), would require an idealistic rather than a materialistic evolution. Spencer never took the step that would have made this possible in his system.<sup>3</sup>

The systems of Mill and Spencer, together with those of the more avowed materialists, were too critical and destructive and too narrowly intellectual to provide for humanity's deeper needs. There was a reaction against these views towards Idealism.<sup>4</sup> In a sense Spencer merely served as a connecting link between Mill and Hegel, the well-known German Idealist. Although Spencer's philosophy was agnostic, it contained a large element of Pantheism; and it furnished an easy transition to a philosophy which professed to make the knowledge of reality complete.<sup>5</sup> This philosophy of Idealism at the time was a bulwark to faith as

. . . it relieved the mind of the haunting dread that reality might prove to be in its ultimate nature a soulless mechanism by affirming that we cannot conceive of objects at all apart from self-conscious mind or spirit, which is thus presupposed by the very facts

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Pflleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain Since 1825, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup>Spencer, op. cit., p. 107f.

<sup>3</sup>Pflleiderer, op. cit., p. 338.

<sup>4</sup>L. E. Elliott-Binns, English Thought 1860-1900, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>Alfred W. Benn, The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. II, p. 398.

which the natural sciences set out to explain. It emphasized our right to interpret our experiences by the categories which we count the highest. It claimed supreme worth for self-conscious personality as the only possible subject of the spiritual activities, knowledge and love and goodness, on which we set the highest value, and as, therefore the only adequate revelation of the ultimate Reality which we call God.<sup>1</sup>

T. H. Green was the acknowledged leader of the school of Idealistic philosophers who arose to combat the existing Spencerism of the day. The cry for the return to Kant was raised some years before 1865,<sup>2</sup> but about this time two things happened which were to help implement such a move. They were the publication by J. H. Sterling of The Secret of Hegel and the settling of T. H. Green in Oxford.<sup>3</sup>

In his Prolegomena to Ethics, Green states that,

"we have . . . to ask whether the experience of connected matters of fact, which in its methodical expression is called science, does not presuppose a principle which is not itself any one or member of such matters of fact, or their result."<sup>4</sup>

He held that there is a spiritual principle "self-distinguishing consciousness", which is ". . . neither included among the phenomena which through its presence to them form a nature, nor consists in their series, nor is itself determined by any of the relations which it constitutes among them."<sup>5</sup> This consciousness is the eternal subject to which objects in time are related.<sup>6</sup> Although this consciousness was taken to be eternal, it was conceived only in its relation to natural phenomena;

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<sup>1</sup>Webb, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. To Sterling should be ascribed the merit of having started this movement with the publication of his work on Hegel mentioned above. (Merz, III, op. cit., p. 412, f.n. 1.)

<sup>4</sup>T. H. Green, Prolegomena to Ethics, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

there was no place in Green's thought for miracles. He does not conceive the universe as a self-subsistent, self-contained structure of thought as Hegel does; nature was constituted by a spiritual substance, an eternal consciousness. He never satisfactorily and concretely answered the question as to whether this consciousness was personal, and one remarked that the ambiguity he shows on this issue countenances a solution in the sense of impersonality.<sup>1</sup>

Edward Caird was an amiable, personal friend of Green's and helped the cause of Idealism both before and after Green's early death in 1882. Caird, in opposition to Comte's idea of "a 'subjective synthesis' or relative centre of knowledge" sought to show that "the true synthesis of philosophy must be objective as well as subjective, and that there can be no religion of Humanity, which it not also a religion of God."<sup>2</sup> He held that the judgment of the self-conscious was synthetic.<sup>3</sup> Through his writings he expounded and criticized the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, and he was the acknowledged leader after Green's death of the school of synthetic Idealistic philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

The general tendency of this movement was against the belief in the personality of ultimate Reality. This was brought out clearly in the development of this thought given, e.g., by F. H. Bradley who argued against assigning personality to the Absolute.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Benn. op. cit., p. 405.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Caird, *The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte*, pp. xvi, xvii.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Vol. I, p. 403.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Jones and J. H. Muirhead, *The Life and Philosophy of Edward Caird*, pp. 282, 283.

<sup>5</sup>F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 470f.



There was to come a reaction against Idealism as a creed especially in the later part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the vogue, however, during a large part of the nineteenth century. Many men turned to it to find a rationale against what has been called the "alien world" of mechanism.<sup>1</sup> They welcomed the theories developed by the romanticists to get behind the prevailing Newtonian science, "discredit its rational scientific method, and substitute some other principles for the interpretation of the reality of the world."<sup>2</sup> Abbott held some beliefs in common with this Idealism; however, he did not become a member of this or of any other existing school of philosophy.

Abbott did not hide his opposition to materialism. He spoke out against it as it made the world and all men machines with the action and interaction of the animate and inanimate machines predetermined even in their minutest movements of limb or thought. The notion that all our thoughts and emotions spring necessarily from antecedent material causes must be dismissed as false, because it is "unworkable".<sup>3</sup> The existence of matter is yet unproved, and it is nothing but a "hypothesis".<sup>4</sup> The conception of matter is replaceable by the concept of "centres of force",<sup>5</sup> but we do not have a concept that can replace "will". It would not work to take this away for such a move would make man a machine and

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<sup>1</sup>John H. Randall, The Making of the Modern Mind, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 598-9.

<sup>3</sup>K & H, op. cit., pp. 282-3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>5</sup>This force here seems to mean for Abbott attracting force. He says that the hypothesis that "every particle of matter attracts every other" actually "works" and commends itself to us. (SOTW, op. cit., p. 5.)

human society would be extinguished.<sup>1</sup> As the cause within us is "will", we may argue the cause of the Universe is reasonable will, too.<sup>2</sup> Abbott declares that the Supreme Will may be designated as "Force, Thought, and Person",<sup>3</sup> but that he desires to make the Divine Force that of Will is apparent, and hence his conception of force differs in this context from that of Herbert Spencer.

Herbert Spencer arrived at the belief that Force is the primary datum in a way that was different from Abbott's reasoning. Asserting that Force, Matter, Space, and Motion are but forms of the indeterminate substance, or real existence (hinted at by Phenomena but unknowable) assumed in consciousness, he then proceeds to reduce Matter and Motion to manifestations of Force; Space and Time to cohesions in the manifestations of Force. Force then is the primary datum which we know only as state of consciousness of which in itself we know nothing.<sup>4</sup> Abbott allows for the concept of Force in necessary Being, but he arrives at this, not by seeing in energy the persistence which intimates the persistent Force of Unknown Cause, as Spencer did.<sup>5</sup> Instead, he seems to posit force in Supreme Being anthropomorphically. Abbott insists that will is found in the universe, not only in man, vegetable life, and non-human animal life, but also in the Supreme Being.<sup>6</sup> He was burdened

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 9, 10. Abbott thus opposes naturalism which ended in a universe controlled by antecedent causes.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Spencer, op. cit., pp. 71, 174.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 194f. Abbott maintained anthropomorphism is "a necessity imposed on us by the very conditions of our nature. . . ." (TNTC, op. cit., p. 39.) In the sequel we shall see Abbott is inconsistent and deviates from his anthropomorphism.

<sup>6</sup>OTW, op. cit., pp. 65-7. Will does not seem to appear in the universe in phenomena until its superficial appearance in primeval vegetable life. Before this there was no will in phenomena. Anterior to all primeval life is the Word. (Ibid.)



to present evolution as involving the Word of God. "Evolve", he insists, no more dispenses with a sculptor than "inspire" dispenses with art and "create" dispenses with tools and time.<sup>1</sup> Also, "What other people call evolution, or the spirit of progress, or Chance, or Nothing, or the Unknowable, that I call the Word of God."<sup>2</sup> Of this Word, Jesus is the supreme expression; yet, ages before His coming, the Word of God was acting through human and non-human Nature.<sup>3</sup> In man at the bottom of physical, mental, and moral actions there is an initial and fundamental exercise of will, i.e., ". . . of force conscious of effort and implying resistance. Will, therefore, was the first cause of them all."<sup>4</sup> He continues,

No essentially human act (as distinct from the actions that we share with animals) was ever performed, no conscious thought elaborated, no character formed without the pre-existence of will and the exercise of force overcoming obstacles.<sup>5</sup>

It seems clear from this that Force attributed as essential in the Supreme Being is analogous to the force noted above in man and is the Force of Will. In fact, Abbott intimates this explicitly when he says that

in ourselves, 'I will' seems to pass, at one time, into 'I act', at another, into 'I think', at another, into 'I am'.

This suggests that the Supreme Will may be revealed<sup>6</sup> in different aspects as being Force, Thought, Person.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>2</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Namely, all of man's physical, mental, and moral actions.

<sup>5</sup>SOTW, op. cit., pp. 11, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

Here, in his doctrine of God, Abbott uses the term 'force' which was a prominent term in Naturalism; but he gives it a different connotation. Abbott appears to have been directing himself to Naturalism and recasting the term 'force' to show that it could have a Christian meaning given it.

Abbott also joins with the Naturalists to deny the occurrence of miracles, but his reason for doing this differs from theirs. The Naturalist denied freedom of Divine Action in Nature and was not concerned with First or Final Causes but only with 'physical' Causes. He denies the possibility of supernatural interference in any shape.<sup>1</sup> Abbott expresses himself thus, "I believe in the fixity of natural Law as much (I think) as the man of science does; I reverence a Law of Nature, not as a result of necessity, but as an expression of God's Will."<sup>2</sup> Christ, therefore, would not desire to break them. Instead, "the Laws of Nature are exemplified as the Will of God by Christ."<sup>3</sup> Abbott closely allies Nature and God. Nature should be regarded "in some sense as a Person."<sup>4</sup> A fault of Nature would be a fault of God.<sup>5</sup> Once again we see Abbott gives a special meaning to a term he uses. In this case he gives the interpretation which was generally held by liberals in regard to the Laws of Nature.<sup>6</sup> While superficially it may seem that he agrees with the Naturalist here; in fact, he does not since he conceives the Laws

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott retains a belief in the 'supernatural' and gives this term his own meaning. It is the name given . . . to the existence of a God; and to His creation and continuous development of all things; the divine action being regarded, not as contrary to Nature, but as above Nature; not as suspending the sequences of Nature, but as originating and supporting them." (K&H, op.cit., p. 371).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 135. <sup>3</sup> TWTC, op. cit., p. 202. <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 106. <sup>6</sup> Randall, op. cit., p. 554.

of Nature to be, in effect, the expression of the Will of God.

There seems to have been an underlying truth in Abbott's viewpoint. The world is said to be held together in Christ,<sup>1</sup> but Abbott did not fully understand how transitory was the contemporary scientific view of the Laws of Nature. The exaggeration of the philosophical importance of the Laws of Nature is said to have lasted until about the end of the Nineteenth Century.<sup>2</sup> It was chiefly through Mach that a saner estimate was gained. He urged that the Laws of Nature

such as we know them, do not refer at all to Nature as a whole, but they are inevitably bound up with finite departments and occurrences. For, as they only refer to regularities, i.e., to numerous repetitions in time and space, or to frequent examples -- they cannot, of course, be applied to one whole of nature, which is unique, and cannot be compared with limited portions of itself as they may exist in time and space.<sup>3</sup>

Besides, present-day scientists "admit that they possess no criterion by which to decide whether any specific event is according to the Laws of Nature or not."<sup>4</sup> Since these Laws refer only to numerous repetitions in time and space, not to Nature as a whole, we are not justified in declaring that what we observe is in fact the only Will of God. This view of the Laws of Nature denies the universal fixedness applied to them not only by Abbott and the Naturalists but also by the Hegelian Idealists as well.

Abbott sought to correct some basic assumptions of this Idealism as

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<sup>1</sup>Colossians 1:17 ". . . in Him (i.e., Christ) all things consists" (marginal reading: 'hold together') (Revised Version of the New Testament) 1881, Oxford at the University Press.

<sup>2</sup>Dampier, Sir William Cecil, A History of Science, p. 459.

<sup>3</sup>Merz, III, op. cit., p. 610.

<sup>4</sup>Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 54.

well as those of Naturalism. He opposed those Idealists who posited an all inclusive consciousness enveloping all in the universe including, somehow, the opposite of good, i.e., evil.<sup>1</sup> From the facts of the visible world, its waste and conflicts, and the teaching of Christ, he defends his belief in an existing force of evil, namely Satan, who opposes God. He will not be dislodged from this doctrine of Christ ". . . by any philosophic analysis demonstrating that good and evil so run into one another that it is impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins."<sup>2</sup> He stresses that this is a belief of his not a fact of knowledge and that it is illogical. But this seems to be the best view to him since, as he notes, he is "dealing not with matters that fall within the range of experience, but with spiritual and supernatural things that belong to the realm of faith, hope, and aspiration."<sup>3</sup> This belief

. . . "works". It enables us, as no other belief does, to go to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the sinful, and to preach Christ's Gospel of the fatherhood of God. All simple, straightforward people who are acquainted with the troubles of life must naturally crave this doctrine. If you ascribe to Providence the work of Satan, they will consciously or unconsciously identify Providence with the author of evil, and look to one above to rescue them from providence. Instead of attempting to console people for all their evils by laying them on the Author of Goodness, we ought to lay them in part upon themselves, in part on the author of evil.<sup>4</sup>

Abbott does not seem absolutely sure that he has avoided dualism in working out this doctrine. He elaborates,

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<sup>1</sup>Such a doctrine is found in Hegel and those who follow him. See Hugh R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>R&H, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

Go back to the primordial atom. Are we to say that the Devil impelled it in the selfish tangential straight line, and that God attracts it with an unselfish anticipated force, and that the result is the harmonious curve of actuality? If you give yourself up to such a degrading dualism as this, will you not be more often fearing Satan than loving God? Will you not be attributing to Satan one moment, what the next will compel you to attribute to God? Where will you draw the line?<sup>1</sup>

He will draw the line where the "spiritual instinct" within him draws it. He asserts he believes in the Fall as it is recorded in Genesis and the teaching of Christ on Satan.<sup>2</sup> Yet, a kind of dualism may be intimated when he says, "In Nature there is evil as well as good. I

cannot therefore worship the Author of all Nature, but must worship the Author of Nature-minus-the evil."<sup>3</sup> We cannot make too much of this, however, as he does not indicate whether the authorship of evil was prior or simultaneous with the authorship of the good; or whether the authorship was subsequent and by a fallen creature. Nevertheless, in his doctrine of Satan Abbott showed his dissent from the popular Hegelianism of his day which, as we have seen, was propagated in Great Britain by Edward Caird and others.

Abbott indicated in one context that he was in favour of some other way than the intellectual analogies made by speculative rationalists to conceive of the Nature of God. According to one way of looking at the Trinity, he explains, knowing and being are held to be united in the Divine Mind. Knowing may be called the "Logos, or Reason, or Word, or

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

Son, of God." Being may be called the Spirit of God and the Son and Spirit may be thought of as being united in God the originator or Father. In commenting on this belief Abbott indicates there is a better way of conceiving of the divine nature:

To different people different aspects of truth command themselves: but to most believers the world of affection will seem to afford better analogies than the world of metaphysics for the illustration of the best conception of the divine nature.<sup>1</sup>

In Abbott's own argument he declared the doctrine of the third Person of the Trinity, the all-pervading Spirit, "works" since it enlarges and purifies our conceptions both of God and man. Instead of seeing the Spirit as Being, Abbott sees the Spirit as the Spirit of Love and Self-sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as the nature of the personality of the Spirit is vague - he sympathizes with us and is all the while with the Father above in heaven - "Does not", he asks,

this give to our conception of God a quasi-panteistic tinge that is not really panteistic but only spiritual, permeating all visible nature, and making all the world of sense around us bear witness to a harmony that is beyond the reach of sense?<sup>3</sup>

Abbott, however, attempts to preserve personality in God the Father and the Son, and, at the same time, have immanence in the Spirit.

We are to think of the Father and the Son anthropomorphically, as united in, or related to, one another, in virtue of a Spirit of divine Order (of which the highest anthropomorphic expression is Love). We are to think of the Spirit non-anthropomorphically, as all-present, all-including, all-immanent, all-moving, all-inspiring, all-vitalizing, quasi-personal - the

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<sup>1</sup> SOTW, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

spiritual air in which all things move and have their being.<sup>1</sup>

Assuming that the conception of a spirit is a moral rather than an intellectual process, he says, "Now when does the Spirit seem nearest to the apprehension of the 'deep things of God'? Is it not when we are exercising those virtues, which, as St. Paul says, 'abide' . . . I mean faith, hope, and love?"<sup>2</sup> Hence, he could say "my nearest conception of a spirit is a personified virtue."<sup>3</sup>

Yet, in this place too, he seems to deny personality to Deity.

He posits:

When we endeavour to form a conception of God, we ought to put aside the limitations of human individuality. Now we cannot do this while we conceive of God simply as the Father, and still less while we conceive of Him simply as the Son; but we can do it when we conceive of Him as being an all-pervasive Power, the source of order and harmony and light, sometimes as a Breath breathing life into all things good and beautiful, sometimes as a Bond or Law, linking or attracting together all things material and spiritual so as to make up the Kosmos or Order of the universe. The traditions of the Church have taught us that there has been such a Power, subsisting from the first with the Father and the Eternal Son, in whom the Father and Son were, and are, united; and by whom the whole human race is bound together in brotherhood to one another and in sonship to the Eternal Father. What is this Being but the personification of that Power, which in the material world, we call attraction and in the immaterial Love?<sup>4</sup>

This maintenance of a quasi-pantheistic concept of God should be remembered when we find Abbott saying the Supreme Will may be revealed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 262.



as a person.<sup>1</sup>

The nature and extent of Abbott's pantheism is difficult for one to fathom due in a large part to his use of words with more than one sense attached to them and, let us admit it, probably also due to his desire to make his pantheism as palatable as possible, both to those who were and to those who were not pantheists. At places he seemed to equate God to Nature as we have seen. Nature should be regarded "in some sense as a person."<sup>2</sup> At another place he admitted he could not worship all Nature, but he could worship only the author of Nature-minus-the-evil.<sup>3</sup> He could deny he would equate God and Nature by quoting the last statement; but, in a man whose general aim seems to be that of including without his thought antithetical propositions given a broad or peculiar meaning, it seems that he views God as really Personal and as, also, really pantheistic (not only quasi-pantheistic), although he admits only to the latter. It does not seem that he had completely hidden his pantheism under his obscure and vague statements. He seems, at times, to lose sight of his declared belief that the Laws of Nature are an active expression of the Will of God; and, instead of worshipping the God of these Laws, he appears to worship the Order which he believed these Laws bring. This seems to be the case when he says,

there will soon come a time when a belief in miracles will be found so incompatible with the reverence which we ought to feel for the Supreme Order as almost to necessitate superstition, and to encourage immorality in the holder of the belief.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>SCW, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>TNTS, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

Also, he seems to lose contact with his proclaimed intention of apprehending the nature of God anthropomorphically and, in a manner similar to a materialist, he describes God as the Power of attraction that is in the material world. At one place he says, "we are to think of the Father and the Son anthropomorphically, as united in, or related to, one another, in virtue of a Spirit of divine Order (of which the highest anthropomorphic expression is Love)."<sup>1</sup> This "Spirit of divine Order" is called Love here, and one is led to agree with Abbott by assuming he means that the Father and Son are united in Love. If we do this, we fail to reckon with Abbott's singular use of words. At another place he speaks of this Spirit which unites the Father and the Son and asks, "what is this Being but the Personification of that Power which in the material world, we call attraction and in the immaterial Love?"<sup>2</sup> The attraction in the material world is not anthropomorphic, and it seems that Abbott's pantheism is evident even at the moment when he says God is 'Love'.

Thus, from an examination of his thought, we find that Abbott in reality was more pantheistic than many of his own estimates of himself would allow. This is true because he loses sight of those statements in which he has guarded against pantheism and attempted to recast the current 'materialistic' thought in a Christian way.

Abbott's general outlook is markedly immanentistic in its leanings. He insists on credence being given to the Revelation of Nature; which, for him, is also the Revelation of the Word. He says,

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<sup>1</sup>SCW, op. cit., p. 44.  
<sup>2</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 262.

As long as we have eyes and ears and the faculties of wonder and admiration, so long must we suppose that the revelation of the Word of God through Jesus of Nazareth has not dispensed with the revelation of the Word of God through the forces of Material Nature. If we wish to approach God, we should not despise the Mediation of the Word of God in its entirety, that is to say, "the mediation of the world with Christ."<sup>1</sup>

The greatest revelation of Nature is the family; the revelation of "the stars and their movements" can claim only second place.<sup>2</sup> Other revelations are Death, Sacrifice, Society, and Visions. Abbott makes a point of the fact that the revelation of Christ dispels the illusions, not by annihilation but by purification,<sup>3</sup> and gives the truth contained in most of these revelations.<sup>4</sup> An exception to this seems to be made in the case of visions. The Word of God is the giver of visions which we should accept as truth. There are many false visions, however, contending for acceptance with the true ones. Those are true which have been found "in accordance with Nature"<sup>5</sup> or, which is the same thing stated differently, ". . . the survival of the fittest decides which are most in harmony with the invisible environment of eternal spiritual truth, and assigns to these the victory."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in relation to Hegelian Idealism, there were points such as the view of evil on which he could not agree at all. He does essentially agree with this school regarding their view of the Laws

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 120f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>3</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, thus, differs from the Romantic Idealists who gave value to these revelations without always seeing the need of interpreting them in relation to the revelation of Christ.

<sup>5</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

of Nature. His trust in the Laws on Nature was a corollary of his belief and insistence on the immanence of the Divine. Although Abbott could not be called Hegelian; yet, he is, in part, an Idealist. His was an Idealism which questioned the existence of matter.<sup>1</sup> One critic correctly noted that Abbott ". . . lapses at times into that kind of Idealism for which matter has no reality, or if not speculatively unreal is at least practically of no importance."<sup>2</sup> He does not appear to include in Reality the material interpreted as spiritual after the manner of the Hegelian Idealists. He maintains the distinction between the material and the spiritual instead of amalgamating them. He appears to make a distinction between the order of the universe and matter itself. The latter is unimportant as far as Reality is concerned, but the former is of the utmost importance. The spiritual is real.

For him, spiritual events (the act of forgiveness is an example) happen currently in the spiritual world, but there is no indication in Abbott that these events constitute Absolute Reality. Those visions which are to be accepted as true are the ones which survive due to their being in harmony with "the invisible environment of eternal spiritual truth."<sup>3</sup> Thus Abbott's Absolute differs from that of the Pragmatist. "The doctrine of an independent and external reality must be given up . . . by a pragmatic philosophy in which reality and experience are regarded as the same fact."<sup>4</sup> Pragmatism declares that "the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth

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<sup>1</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 370.

<sup>2</sup>Christian Quarterly Review, Vol. V, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Bawden, The Principles of Pragmatism, p. 255.

happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events."<sup>1</sup> Abbott does not limit reality to experience in this manner. He maintains that in geometry we must use our imagination to arrive at the invisible archetypes of the figures, planes, and solids about which our propositions alone are true. These are the "immaterial realities" of the visible chalk-drawn figures.<sup>2</sup> Abbott's basic deviation from Pragmatism is great when we realise Reality for him is eternal and invisible.

Abbott's Absolute is beyond experience while Pragmatism insists it must be in experience. Abbott conceives of God as "a Bond or Law, linking or attracting together all things material and spiritual so as to make up the Kosmos or order of the universe."<sup>3</sup>

Abbott is neither a consistent adherent to Pragmatism nor to any current philosophical school of thought. His aim was not to adapt a school of philosophy to meet his intellectual needs, but it was rather to criticise the existing schools in such a way as to entice them to accept Christianity in a non-miraculous form. He attempted to recast the thought and to redefine the key words of existing philosophical systems in such a way as to eliminate what was contrary to the Christian way of thought. He disarmed them by taking away the destructive power of their weapons, and this was done to a large degree by giving new meanings to their favorite terms. At the same time he made concessions

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<sup>1</sup>William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 30f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

to them on points that he considered were integuments of truth or illusions, no longer essential, and therefore dispensable. The total result of this effort was a rather vague, inconsistent, and self-contradictory philosophy. Therefore, it is doubtful whether the educated skeptics he wished to win could have been permanently gained for the Church through this approach. The antagonism to traditional Christianity (and even to non-miraculous Christianity) was, at many points, deep and unyielding anyway. He could not have expected complete success, but this is not to say that his works were not helpful at some points both to the educated skeptics and to those within the Church who were inflicted with doubts due to the dictates of the contemporary philosophies. Regardless of the many errors in his works, that which Abbott was trying to do -- i.e., to witness to antagonistic philosophies -- was a task that needed to be done.

One doubts, however, that Abbott was always entirely justified in making his criticisms of current philosophies in view of the fact that he was not completely innocent of propagating the very things he was criticising. It is doubtful that he had the right to criticise the synthesis of Hegel when the latter made evil a form of Good, because Abbott himself makes God the Order of a world in which evil is an ever present fact. Furthermore, did he have the right to transpose the Force of Ultimate Reality as found in Spencer into the force of Supreme Will when he turns around and makes the Spirit of God the attraction that holds matter together? In doing these things, Abbott partook, in part at least, of those very qualities which made Naturalism and Idealism unattractive to orthodox Christianity.

A very significant point arises in Abbott's philosophy of Reality which is important for our study of his New Testament exegesis and theology. For Abbott, God was very immanent in the world. It followed from this that God's revelation of Himself within the world - His natural revelation of Himself - was all important. He believed that God had revealed Himself in Nature which included the family, society, non-human nature, sacrifice, seers, and death. Although this revelation contained illusions they were being removed. The Word of God worked immanently before the coming of Jesus of Nazareth into the world as the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> He came to dispel what illusions were left in the revelation of Nature. This He did by being "a consummate Man as far superior to ordinary men as the Truth is superior to even the very best of illusions."<sup>2</sup> The Word which had been operative throughout history became flesh in a non-miraculous way. God was held to be so immanent there was no need for a miraculous revelation of Himself.

In his doctrine of divine immanence Abbott appears to have drifted into a belief that asserted God is both pantheistic and personal. This is characteristic of his whole approach. He took the thought of the existing schools of philosophy and adapted them, or parts of them, into his own "system." He corrected, recast, and in part, he agreed with them. If this could have been done with more of a continuity and consistency, his "system" would have been more attractive than it is. He succeeded in pointing out some evils in the current philosophies, but

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<sup>1</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 203.



he failed to develop a consistent system of thought.

Abbott's position in philosophy was evidently a middle of the road position in a peculiar sense. He wished to regain for the church those who had given up worship due to their philosophical beliefs. He tried to work out an acceptable position somewhere between scepticism and orthodoxy. It appears that the result was a "system" of thought which was too sceptical for most Christians and too Christian for most sceptics. At any rate, this peculiar middle of the road position was what Abbott occupied in an attempt to mediate between Science and Christianity.

Spencer had declared in his chapter on religion and science: "We too often forget that not only is there 'a soul of goodness in things evil,' but very generally also a soul of truth in things erroneous."<sup>1</sup> As far as human beliefs in general are concerned, although they may appear entirely wrong, "the implication is that they germinated out of actual experience - originally contained, and perhaps still contain, some small amount of verity."<sup>2</sup> Abbott, although attempting to Christianize Spencer, yielded much to the dictates of the current science, even holding that within the Scriptures there is a kernel of truth surrounded by a husk of error. Abbott's task was to apply Spencer's principle that there was 'a soul of truth in things erroneous' to the New Testament, discarding such things as miracles which he considered erroneous, but retaining what he considered the kernel of truth in the erroneous accounts. We shall see, as we proceed, that Abbott allowed his philosophy to dictate his position throughout his works.

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<sup>1</sup>Spencer, op. cit., p. 17f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

### Ecclesiastical Parties

Abbott declares he is a member of what he designated variously as the Liberal Party, the Middle Party, the Party of Growth, and the Party of Progressive Truth.<sup>1</sup> The term, "Broad Church," as a party label, appeared in The Edinburgh Review in an article in 1853. It was "loosely applied to those Churchmen who held liberal views in one form or another, though they were not really a 'party' as were the Evangelicals and the Anglo-Catholics."<sup>2</sup> It was especially the tendencies of thought found in Catholicism, whether labeled Anglo-Catholic or Roman Catholic, that Abbott could not value highly. James A. Aldis wrote Abbott,

It seems to me through your intense hatred of Newmanism and Romanism (most righteous hatred) you have rather blinded yourself to the possibilities of Catholicism as shown (imperfectly indeed) in Lux Mundi and all the writings of Bishop Gore.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott's open encounter with Newmanism gives us the most polemical period of his career. We are somewhat surprised as we come across it. Before this he had kept controversy involving names and personalities out of his writings almost without exception, and afterwards he did very much the same except for a rather minor clash with Professor Janarius.<sup>4</sup> He seems to have been compelled to enter the fray with Newmanism against his own will. He felt it was a strange, unnatural

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<sup>1</sup>E. A. Abbott, Oxford Sermons, p. viiif.

<sup>2</sup>Elliott-Binns, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>3</sup>Unpublished letter, St. John's College Library, Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup>See Edwin A. Abbott, A Protest Against Perturbed Criticism.

position for him. He asks:

. . . what has bewitched me, . . . that, so late in life<sup>1</sup>  
I should take to controversy? For 30 years, ever since  
I began to teach, I have sought peace and ensued it, and  
have gone on principle that the best way to exterminate  
error is to plant truth. And now!<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Abbott would not avoid conflict in order to preserve peace at the price of principles.

This controversy arose over Abbott's publication of Philomythus in which he attacked what he called the credulity of John Henry Newman. The latter's public influence had diminished for a while after his secession to Rome in 1845, but his star rose again during Abbott's time. "The 'Apologia', published in 1864, was the beginning of what may be called Newman's second reputation with the great public."<sup>3</sup> The Grammar of Assent followed in 1870 and his Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles was republished in 1890. The latter work called forth Philomythus. Newman's influence seemed to be about to expand and increase. Abbott notes that a Roman prelate had lauded the logical character of the Grammar of Assent; Wilfrid Ward had declared that Newman's theory of faith "lives and will ever live as a permanent contribution to the philosophy of religious belief"; English speaking people were being invited to contribute to a testimonial to Newman; and study of his works was being encouraged.<sup>4</sup> Abbott did not believe people should be

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<sup>1</sup>He was approximately 55 at the time.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Philomythus, An Antidote Against Credulity, p. lix.

<sup>3</sup>A. W. Benn, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>4</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., p. 2.

so encouraged to read all of Newman's works. During this time he read the Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles for the first time and afterward proclaimed, "words, and temper, would fail me, if I attempted to describe briefly the bewildering amazement, at first, and the absolute horror, at last, with which I was affected by that book."<sup>1</sup>

The truth is that Newman's outlook was just opposite to Abbott's on almost every point. Abbott decried the "rooted and superstitious credulity"<sup>2</sup> of the Cardinal which made him alter and suppress inconvenient facts, or even place himself beyond the appeal to facts. Newman's appeal to probability as the guide instead of a guide of life vexed Abbott. While not denying probability is a guide in life, he wished to limit its use. Our ordinary actions (such as going to breakfast in the morning) are done in faith and no thought of probability is involved. Success requires that "our habitual basis for the immense majority of the actions of life, should be, not probability, but faith based upon experience."<sup>3</sup> We see here now Newman's acceptance of probability as the guide cut into the heart of Abbott's outlook. Probability is not an adequate guide to a belief in God. "How could a man pray to a probable God, or pray to God upon the grounds of probability?"<sup>4</sup> There was a great danger that one might lose his faith in God if he proceeded on probability alone. At first he would, if he was logical, accept

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. lxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

many of the ecclesiastical miracles on this basis. Later, by evidence, common sense, or honesty he might feel compelled to surrender the least credible and this might lead him step by step to give up his belief in God.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott believed in God and in Christ through faith and by his will as we have seen - not on probability. However, he refused to believe in miracles through faith and insisted that the accounts of the miracles should be critically tested. Newman, taking his springboard of probability, argued that since the Laws of Nature had been broken in the New Testament times, especially in the case of the Resurrection, they might be broken again; for, what God did once He is likely to do again.<sup>2</sup> On this basis he went on to make arguments for the acceptance of some, at least, of the ecclesiastical miracles. Abbott argued that yesterday will not happen again precisely as before; and "even if it is assumed that God did 'intervene' miraculously when He created the world anew in Christ, it is illogical to infer that He consequently was likely to thus 'intervene' in later times, or even that such an intervention was 'not improbable.'"<sup>3</sup> Abbott made the intellectual test of miracles; Newman followed the heart. Abbott declared,

Newman does not believe that God intends us to attain to truth by using our mind and understanding as well as our heart and our soul, and that, about historical facts, we are not to use our heart, and are to use our intellect and observation. In effect, he is constantly asking, not "How shall I find out, with God's help, the truth about this or that fact?" but, "What does God wish me to believe, in some miraculous or quasi-miraculous way, about this or that fact?"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 78f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

In this controversy Abbott, no doubt, exaggerated the difference between probability and faith. He stated at one place,

'probability' means 'provableness.' But no man now-a-days, that is no educated man, believes that he can prove the truth of Christianity. Once people thought it could be proved by miracles alone; no one thinks that now.<sup>1</sup>

Here Abbott seems so anxious to disallow miracles as a proof for Christianity that he (in order to discredit it) made of probability something more provable than it actually is. One reviewer opined that Abbott made the mistake of not seeing the similar origin, procedure, and conviction of faith and probability.<sup>2</sup> But if this is true, why did Abbott picture these as being opposed to one another? Marcus Dods sheds light on this problem when he notes that Abbott omitted latent probability from his consideration. It is a latent probability we shall go to breakfast in the morning; and, in an illuminating passage, he continues,

Dr. Abbott seems to us to use the term "probability" as equivalent to probability explicit and considered, and to deny that latent probability is probability at all. Few believing men can analyze their belief, or sift out what is instinctive from what is intellectual in the grounds of it; but if the analysis is undertaken, it will certainly be found that both the intellectual and the instinctive elements in it proceed upon probabilities. . . . It is the number and variety as much as the individual decisiveness of these probabilities which strengthen the certitude of our faith in God and by showing that in certain numerous cases faith springs up and gains strength without any explicit weighing of probabilities, Dr. Abbott has not

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 71. Once again we have an example of a singular colouring having been given to a word by Abbott.

<sup>2</sup>John Owen, Review of Philemythus, The Academy, Vol. 39, 1891, p. 553.





proved his point that faith is not founded on probability . . .<sup>1</sup>

These considerations make us believe Abbott was too hasty and too categorical when he said that there is no room for probability in faith.<sup>2</sup> Yet, his point was well taken when he pointed out what probability may become. Of and by itself, without love, worship, and the Spirit of Christ it may become a dry, intellectual weighing of probabilities for and against proposition after proposition until the life of hope and aspiration are atrophied through their inaction. If we have nothing but this, I believe Abbott was trying to say, we will stand to lose our faith in the probability of God when we come to discount one of the least likely ecclesiastical miracles.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>2</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>The inference from this is that Newman lacked love and approached God with probability and fear in the main. This may have been true to a degree, though not necessarily to the degree Abbott insinuated in places. Abbott believed Newman approximated to atheism. "Practical atheism being that state of mind in which a man believes in God without a basis of Love, Newman . . . if he had really in his heart of hearts adopted this theory . . . would have been a practical atheist." (Philomythus, op. cit., p. 81f.) R. H. Hutton, the editor of the Spectator, attacked Abbott's statement that Newman's religion was a religion of fear adding that Newman was "the man who wrote 'The Dream of Gerontius,' a poem which contains one of the most touching and even overwhelming expressions of love for Christ which is to be found in the whole of the English literature . . ." (The Spectator, April 18, 1891, p. 538) Abbott replied, "In 1845 Newman expressed his fear that he might be under a 'judicial delusion' when he prayed that God would not 'add Himself as an adversary against him; and when he passionately asked 'what have I done to be deserted . . .' I assert that Newman did feel . . . an 'abject frustration of mind' before a 'Judge' whom I should describe not as 'severe' but as diabolically bad." Abbott quoted a passage from 'The Dream of Gerontius' which supports this estimate of Newman. The latter wrote:

Along my earthly life, the thought of death  
And judgment was to me most terrible;  
I had it eye before me and I saw  
The Judge severe, a'en in the Crucified.

(The Spectator, April 25, 1891, pp. 592, 593.)



Besides this, there were many erroneous tendencies in Newman's Roman Catholic theology that Abbott exposed. Newman applied the doctrine of probability in a Roman Catholic manner to the question of the validity of the ecclesiastical miracles, arguing that since miracles happened in the New Testament they are likely to happen again. The assumption that Newman brought with this view was that Protestants argue "what God did once, He is not likely to do again!"<sup>1</sup> This is unfair and shows lack of understanding. Abbott points out that educated Protestants, so far as he knew, "deny ecclesiastical miracles because they are proved, so far as they have been investigated to be either natural, and no miracles, or else false."<sup>2</sup> The Newmanian and Roman Catholic theory of faith to the effect we should become Christians in order to believe brought out an "uneasy wonder" from Martineau and a refutation from Abbott. Dr. Martineau, in a reference to Newman's works, said, "'an uneasy wonder comes upon us when we are told that in early times men became Christians, not because they believed but in order to believe . . .'"<sup>3</sup> Abbott disclaims this dictum of Newman and declares the early Christians believed on conviction.<sup>4</sup> Again, the immorality is noticed of the attempt of one of Newman's disciples to persuade a friend to become a Roman Catholic because it was better, for the sake of his soul's salvation, to say that he believes what, in the teachings of that Church, in his heart, he does not believe, than

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<sup>1</sup>Philomythus, op. cit. p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

it is for him to remain outside.<sup>1</sup> All this was needed in the face of the rising Newmanism.

Perhaps more important than this to the average person (who would not have time for the task) was Abbott's elaboration of the many rhetorical tools used by Newman in his writings. This was the description given of Newman's writings:

Transparently clear in appearance, his general propositions abound in reservations, qualifications, peculiar usages of words - pitfalls, masked batteries, line after line of concealed entrenchments on which he can fall back in case of a retreat; and, if you attack a general statement of his, you can never feel sure at the last, that he will not explode both his assailant and himself, by blowing his own proposition to pieces and proving that it never had any meaning at all.<sup>2</sup>

The different arts of Newman's rhetoric are enumerated as: the art of oscillation;<sup>3</sup> the art of "assimilation" or "drawing parallels";<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>In this art, after you have reached your conclusion, you fix on two extremes between which your conclusion is the happy mean. The one extreme is a concession to your reader, the other is an exorbitant demand upon him. You "oscillate" between these extremes, ever progressing slowly towards your own conclusion. In this way you "bewilder and confuse" your reader until he readily accepts your conclusions as a compromise. Or you may "oscillate," "through the whole of a period, between two meanings of a phrase, and . . . end by using it in the sense in which your reader will admit its true, "thus leaving him with the vague impression that the sense in which he denies the truth of the phrase may be true after all. (Philomythus, op. cit., p. 211, 212.)

<sup>4</sup>This consists in "cheerfully assuming that cases are 'parallel,' when they are not really parallel, except in some small particular that is not to the point." (Ibid., p. 212.)

and the "art of lubrication."<sup>1</sup>

Abbott is convincing in his examples of these procedures in Newman, and he did a great service in pointing them out to the public.<sup>2</sup> The disconcerting point that arises is that Abbott practices much of the same thing which he condemns in Newman.

We cannot be sure of some of Abbott's general statements. They have qualifying words and reservations. He has peculiar usages of words and his meaning is not always clear. We have already noticed these things in his use of "Reason" and "Understanding."

He also uses the device of "assimilation" or "drawing parallels," the essential of which is "cheerfully" to assume that cases are parallel when they are not really except in a particular that is not to the point. At one place Abbott faces the charge that his notions

<sup>1</sup>This is "greasing" the descent from the premises to the conclusion and "oscillation" and "assimilation" may be used for this. You must employ a delicate handling of words, "enabling you to form, easily and naturally a great number of finely-graduated propositions, shading away as it were, from the assertion 'X is white,' to the assertion 'X is black' . . ." (Ibid., p. 213.) An inward contempt for logic and words must be obtained until you can say, "After all, if this or that is not quite true, does it so very much matter? Who knows what is 'quite true'? We are going in the right direction; that is the main point." (Ibid., p. 214.) Also you must have a "passionate longing for a certain conclusion" which will make you blind to your procedure. You must be able to deceive yourself so as to be able to deceive others more artistically. (Ibid., pp. 214, 215.)

<sup>2</sup>One observer declared that Philomythus, "furnishes a needed critical examination, from the outside of the logical basis which Newman supplied for his Romanism. Nothing could be more complete than Dr. Abbott's exposure of the essential dishonesty of the logic and rhetoric of the Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles. Newman was honest himself but his reasoning was not." (Review of Philomythus, Presbyterian and Reformed Review, Vol. II, 1891, p. 696.)

are "vague" and he sets out to refute it. He first draws a parallel when he says his notions are in the Creeds, "if you interpret the Creeds spiritually."<sup>1</sup> Part of the skill in using this device is in being audacious so the reader will assume there is a parallel in fact.<sup>2</sup> That all of his notions are in the Creeds when they are interpreted spiritually - especially those that deal with areas of intellectual endeavour such as Biblical criticism that have for the most part arisen since the formation of the Creeds - is patently untrue. It is more true to say that his notions are only partly, not wholly, in the Creeds even when they are on the same subjects as are found in the Creeds. Besides this, Abbott expressly says he does not accept the dogma of the miraculous conception.<sup>2</sup> He proceeds from this point to draw a conclusion of a sort which is not to the point when he says, "I do not think the Creeds are more 'vague' when interpreted spiritually than when interpreted literally."<sup>3</sup> This certainly is not to the point especially if we consider the differences between his "notions" and the Creeds. The point is whether or not his "notions" are vague. It is instructive to notice how Abbott goes on toward his preconceived conclusion at this point, revealing what he noticed in Newman, i.e., a "passionate longing for a certain conclusion."<sup>4</sup> He proceeds, as he accused Newman of doing, "easily and naturally" with "a great number of finely-graduated propositions," to the conclusion. Accordingly, he

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<sup>1</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>R&H, op. cit., p. 347.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>4</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., p. 214.

argues: can it be true that the Spiritual Resurrection of Christ is more vague than the Material Resurrection when even those who hold to belief in the Material Resurrection admit the Spiritual Resurrection is the essence of the act? The outcome of an affirmative answer would be "equivalent to declaring that any statement of the essential Resurrection of Jesus is "vague." Still he plods on with calculated phrases which (he hopes) will lead us to his conclusion, thus:

Again, redemption from sin is a spiritual notion, redemption from the flames of a material hell is a material notion; but is the former more "vague" than the latter? If so, then we are led to this conclusion, that all spiritual notions are more vague than material notions; and the vagueness which you censure is a necessary characteristic of every religion that approaches God as He ought to be approached. I mean as a Spirit and through the medium of spiritual conceptions.<sup>1</sup>

From specific parallels, the spiritual (which we are supposed to think is his notion) and the material Resurrection and hell, he goes on to generalize on "all spiritual notions" (his ideas) and to say, if the specific spiritual interpretations are more vague than the specific material interpretations, then this is generally true. But if we hold this we "censure" a vagueness which is a "necessary" characteristic in approaching God as he "ought" by "necessity" to be approached. In such a state of mind we are supposed to be ready for the acceptance of Abbott's self-exoneration which goes thus:

. . . to my mind you are not justified in thus using the word "vague," which ought rather to be applied to notions wandringly and shiftingly defined; as for example, if I defined the Resurrection of Jesus as being at one time

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<sup>1</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 321.

the rising of His body, at another the rising of His Spirit; or if I spoke of redemption, now as deliverance from sin, and now as deliverance from punishment convict me of such inconsistencies;<sup>1</sup> and I will submit to be<sup>2</sup> called "vague"; but at present I plead, "not guilty."

This is a good example of his rhetoric.

Abbott's works must be read with great care if you are to understand what he means, and even with this precaution it is very difficult to be positive about your general statements about him. If you derive a general conclusion about a facet of his thought from a statement in one context, you cannot be sure that he will not subsequently, in another context, give either a slightly different statement or one that tends to contradict his former view. We have already seen that this is true and we shall see more examples of this as we proceed. This practice is obvious throughout his writings, but it is in Philomythus, in his critique of Newman, that he furnishes a critique for himself.

Philomythus, by itself, was critical enough, but its publication drew Abbott into even more controversy. One of his adversaries was R. H. Hutton, the editor of The Spectator at the time, who had written a work entitled Cardinal Newman and who thought Abbott was unfair in his severe criticisms of the Cardinal. Mr. Wilfrid Ward also came to the defence of Newman's honor in the pages of this same periodical. These men represented, no doubt, the public sentiment that arose in favour of Newman after his death; and they wanted justice to be done to a man who was a great leader in many ways. After all, Newman could not defend himself. One letter to the Editor during this period

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<sup>1</sup>These are not the only ways one can be "shifty." We have already noticed some of Abbott's shiftingly defined notions.

<sup>2</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 321.

proclaimed,

. . . not a few, for more reasons than one, will regret that Dr. Abbott did not assault Newman while he was alive, instead of after his death. We should have seen, I think, a grand repetition of the flaying of an assailant, as we saw it when Kingsley attacked. But, alas! the Lion is dead.<sup>1</sup>

Ward and Hutton seem to have defended Newman to their own satisfaction; while, at the same time, they withdrew the accusation of insincerity which they had applied to Abbott, and to which he had violently objected.<sup>2</sup> Abbott did not purposely wait to criticize Newman after he died, but it was not until then that he read Newman's Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles and was in a position to evaluate it.<sup>3</sup>

Laying personalities and polemics aside, Abbott, though not without his own vagueness and shortcomings, struck a needed blow against the revival through Newman of Medievalism with its desire to believe what is superstition but "safe."<sup>4</sup> Newman ran to this shelter in the face of the onrushing floods of liberalism. From this position he produced many theological works in an attempt to bring many after him. Abbott's declared belief was that reconstruction, assimilation, and adjustment to new intellectual forces was needed. He attempted to give a new view of history for he thought his age must learn ". . . to combine a resolute trust in Righteousness with a resolute distrust in all history (whether of things animate or

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<sup>1</sup>The Spectator, May 2, 1891, p. 622. This unsigned letter may have been from Ward who wrote several letters to the editor on this controversy.

<sup>2</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. lxvii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. lxxviif.



inanimate) that is not commended to us by appropriate evidence."<sup>1</sup> Surely, an advance so as to assimilate and understand the new knowledge in a Christian way was the step that was needed rather than a return to Rome. On the other hand, we are not saying that Abbott gave a convincing defence for a "non-miraculous" Christianity, or that such a step was needed. Abbott was a liberal "sheltering" himself under a "non-miraculous" Christianity and appealing to both conservatives and agnostics to follow him. Both of these men were pleading a case and attempting to make it as acceptable as possible to their hearers. They both used a similar artistic rhetoric though for diverse purposes - Newman for the conservative cause, Abbott for the liberal cause.

We thus see that Abbott's relation to conservatives was that of opposition. We shall now examine his relation to other liberals. In his earlier years, and even at the time of his ordination, Abbott had ". . . no suspicion that the miracles were not historical." One of the reasons he gives for this is that the miracles had been kept in the background by his Rector, a member of the Broad Church School. He had rested his faith on Christ Himself and not on the miracles.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, he was influenced by the Broad Church school early; the books of F. D. Maurice were read "freely" in his childhood home.<sup>3</sup> Although he found Maurice "a very obscure writer," with "mechanical defects of style," Maurice's work on the Atonement gave him "more

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9f.

help than perhaps any other book on Christian doctrine." There he first learned to look at the inner meaning of a rite and to discuss "the possibility of illustrating that inner meaning by the phenomena of daily life."<sup>1</sup> Abbott followed these principles in his own way, accepting the Creeds "spiritually" but not "materially", as we have seen, while Maurice decries this very interpretation of the Creeds.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Maurice reinterpreted the Creeds "with a freedom which, in the judgment of most believers, took away their original meaning for something similar to unitarianism."<sup>3</sup> Both, however, stressed the immanence of Christ. Maurice held we are being enlightened by the Divine Word,<sup>4</sup> and Abbott emphasized that evolution was due to the Word.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the main difference in Maurice and Abbott is in regard to their views of the Scriptures. Maurice believed the Word and the Spirit would connect and reconcile for the children those documents which seem so inconsistent within themselves.<sup>6</sup> Instead of getting rid of the documents of the Bible in face of the advancing modern civilization, he feels their necessity increasing with every new step of civilization.<sup>7</sup> Abbott felt the necessity of eliminating the miracles from the Biblical records in support of his "non-miraculous Christianity." Their beliefs differed to a great extent and their aims were divergent - Maurice

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>F. D. Maurice, *Theological Essays*, pp. 152-155, 269.

<sup>3</sup>A. W. Benn, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>5</sup>SOTW, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup>Maurice, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 343. He goes on to declare that what people in need want is not plenary or verbal inspiration but a book of Life. (Ibid., p. 346.)

wished to vindicate orthodox theology to the unitarians,<sup>1</sup> while Abbott wished to win the current schools of philosophy (in particular) and the conservatives to his views of Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

More in line with this same purpose was Abbott's contemporary and friend, J. R. Seeley,<sup>3</sup> whose Ecce Homo was an attempt to reconcile Positivism and Christianity. The times changed and the Broad Church approach changed as the nineteenth century advanced.

The compromises of the middle sixties have their counterpart in the eighties, but with this difference, that their authors speak with less certainty and confidence as the rising flood of rationalism makes their foothold ever more insecure, and the ground yielded more conspicuous than the ground retained.<sup>4</sup>

There is a similarity of thought in the works of Abbott and Seeley. The latter suggests that the Old and New Testaments would lose their obsolescence if "Nature" were written for "God" in the text.<sup>5</sup> Like Abbott, Seeley has a tendency to give special meanings to words in order to diminish the differences between Christianity and Science.

<sup>1</sup>John Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Both Abbott and Maurice were awake to the pressing social problems that had arisen in their time. Abbott defended his religion as a "Religion of the Masses" and made trenchant statements regarding the rising "socialism." Although seeing it could be used vindictively he declared, "Socialism owes all that is good in it to Christ." (K&H, op. cit., p. 326.)

<sup>3</sup>Seeley and Abbott collaborated on the authorship of English Lessons for English People - the American edition of which was published in 1891 (Boston, Roberts Brothers) and dedicated to their Old Head Master at the City of London School, E. F. W. Mortimer.

<sup>4</sup>A. W. Benn, op. cit., p. 441.

He protested against "that fatal propensity to exaggerate differences" between philosophical sceptics and Christianity as well as between other religions and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> He believes Christianity has failed because of its supernaturalism.<sup>2</sup> But he also declares that we (Scientists and Christians) are all supernaturalists in that we all believe in the existence of a world beyond our knowledge. This is very much like Abbott's practice of believing in the supernatural but not in miracles. Abbott seems to share ideas with Seeley more than with any other of his contemporaries.

Another who gave up trust in miracles was James Martineau, "the chief of that Unitarian and Broad Church array whose criticisms on the dominant Evangelical theology led up to the great explosion of 1860."<sup>3</sup> Both Martineau and Abbott conceive force as will; but, Martineau conceived matter as a form of divine will, (as all will not human is divine).<sup>4</sup> Abbott, as we have noticed, does not see will arising in the world until plant life originates; and this will brings conflict, yet it has no will to disobey.<sup>5</sup> Law is supreme; and it seems the postulation of its existence through the Eternal Word delivers Abbott, at least at this place,<sup>6</sup> from the materialism toward which Martineau drifted.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>3</sup>Benn, op.cit., p.433.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>5</sup>SOTW, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>6</sup>At another place Abbott, as we have seen, seems to have lost sight of the belief that Law and Order were due to the will of the Eternal Word and to have equated the attraction of matter and the Spirit of God.

These differences of Abbott with the other members of the Broad Church School substantiate the fact that this was not a Party, as was the Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, but a School composed of men who held various liberal views. Abbott does not seem to have had a contemporary who followed him in all particulars nor one whom he thus followed. Such following of external authority was probably foreign to Abbott's nature. He extolled the authority of conscience in religious matters. One should not teach from authority, as Newman did, but from conviction; and when it comes to the question of our Master, "Who say ye that I am?", "how vain or tremulous" would be the reply that made reference only to what the best authorities say.<sup>1</sup> This appeals to our better religious nature and has a good moral ring to it.

But at the same time, while Abbott saw how authority determined Newman's belief, he did not see how his via media position tended to do the same thing to his own. In the case of one, external authority, in the case of the other, a necessity for destruction, was brought to the consideration of what is true. According to Abbott, the Party of Growth necessarily involves "destruction and partial conservation."<sup>2</sup> If this were literally carried out, we would, it seems on occasions have to destroy out of necessity, even though our conscience was against it. I am sure Abbott would not have said this, but it seems he maneuvers himself into the belief in the necessity of destruction by avowing himself to be in the Party of Growth which is the via media of the

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<sup>1</sup>Philomythus, op. cit., pp. 97-100.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Oxford Sermons, op. cit., p. viii.

Party of Destruction (those who say God is unknowable and who disallow both Old and New Testaments because they contain miracles and the life of Jesus which they call myth)<sup>1</sup> and the Conservative Party (those who allow: no growth in our knowledge of the Scriptures through criticism; no growth in our knowledge of God even in poetry, history, or science; no growth in our knowledge of right and wrong).<sup>2</sup> This necessity of partial destruction does not seem to be consistent with his declaration that the other two parties have a priori opinions concerning miracles while the liberals have ". . .no a priori prejudice against miracles,"<sup>3</sup> especially if we call to mind his own belief that Christ would not break God's will as represented by the Laws of Nature.

This necessity of destruction in order to grow, in order to meet the demands of Science, or similar reasons, appears to have been the feeling of a good many of the Broad Church School especially during the 1880's as the forces of rationalism demanded more and more. Abbott shared this feeling as well as that of the optimism of this school of thought. He believed that the miracles of the Bible would soon be generally disbelieved and that the future would vindicate his liberal stand. With the miracles removed more doubters would become believers. This thought motivated him in his search for a non-miraculous Christianity. It was in this hope that he dedicated The Kernel and the Husk to: "THE DOUBTERS OF THIS GENERATION AND THE BELIEVERS OF THE NEXT."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. xvii-xxv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xxvii.

Abbott's antagonism toward conservatism was augmented by his misunderstanding of this school, and by his peculiar usage of words such as 'probability.' It was untrue to say that all conservatives of his day allowed "no growth in our knowledge of God even in poetry, history, or science. . .".<sup>1</sup> Also, his antagonism toward the a priori position of conservatives and atheists concerning miracles seems to have been marked by a singular blindness to his own a priori position to the effect that he must of necessity destroy in order to build in his faith. This necessity marks Abbott's works at almost every turn. Because of this we can say Abbott's thought was determined to a great extent, unknown to him it seems, by his party stand. This will become even more obvious after a closer study of Abbott's relation to his times in the field of Biblical study.

### Biblical Studies

Several things happened in the Church of England during Abbott's early lifetime that opened the way for greater freedom in the treatment of the Scriptures by the clergy. With the publication in 1855 of Stanley's commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul and Benjamin Jowett's commentaries on Thessalonians, Romans, and Galatians, historical criticism is said to have been definitely established in England.<sup>2</sup> A work that should be seen as a turning point in English theology, because

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<sup>1</sup>One reviewer said, "Without denying that there are here and there individuals to whom such a description may apply, we utterly deny that any such party exists." (Church Quarterly Review, Vol. IX, 1879, p. 539 in review of Oxford Sermons.)

<sup>2</sup>V.F. Storr, Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1800 - 1860, p. 398.



the writers helped to win for the Church the right of free inquiry, was Essays and Reviews in which it was declared that the Bible should be studied as any other book.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, there came the judgement that set free Bishop Colenso, an avowed liberal.<sup>2</sup> The Clerical Subscription Act of 1865 further secured freedom since it required the clergy to give only a general assent to the Prayer Book and the Thirty-nine Articles. From this time the clergy was granted the right to hold liberal views "so long as no fundamental article of faith was denied."<sup>3</sup>

Abbott, during his student days at the University, found the theological works which he studied to be seriously lacking in critical treatment. Especially was this true of the first three Gospels, on which he professed,

"... looking at them critically, as I had been accustomed to look at Greek and Latin books - I was amazed to find that little or nothing had been done by English scholars to compare the different styles and analyse the narratives into their component parts."<sup>4</sup>

Through his study of the classics, he had learned to tabulate the differences of style and to render in two styles the same piece of composition. This method brought him to the front in his year and, after receiving his degree, he desired to apply it to the study of the first three Gospels. Of this desire he related,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 29, 430.

<sup>2</sup>J.E. Carpenter, The Bible in the Nineteenth Century, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 12.

It seemed to me a monstrous thing that we should have three accounts of the same life, accounts closely agreeing in certain parts, but widely varying in others, and yet that, with all the aids of modern criticism, we should not be able to determine which accounts, or which parts of the three accounts, were the earliest.<sup>1</sup>

The elimination of parts of the first three Gospels apparently did not form a part of his original plan. But, after devoting himself to this course of study for some time, he came to a result for which he was not "prepared"; for, he was "gradually led to the conclusion that the miraculous element in the Gospels was not historical."<sup>2</sup> He does not indicate that the a priori impossibility of miracles entered into the question, but we have already seen that he disallowed miracles on these grounds. There were other considerations which also led him to deny the miracles of Scripture. "Often," he affirmed,

as I studied the accounts of a miracle, I could see it as it were in the act of growing up, watch its first entrance into the Gospel narrative, note its modest beginning, its subsequent development; and then I was forced to give it up.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in a manner resembling that of D. F. Strauss, he could discount miracles on the basis of the evidence within the narratives alone; and, like Strauss, he did not have to revert to his a priori argument against them.

Abbott acknowledges that he sees "considerable force" in many of the arguments of Strauss.<sup>4</sup> The thaumaturgic and unscientific parts of Christ's life "would have inevitably gathered round the life of any

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 21.

great Reformer in Israel."<sup>1</sup> Yet, while it could be said of Strauss that he questioned not only the dress of the Gospels, but the kernel as well,<sup>2</sup> Abbott wished to defend the thesis that there was a reliable kernel in the Gospels. We shall go further into Abbott's criticism of the Gospels later, but here we shall indicate its general tendencies as compared to those of Strauss.

Abbott believed the kernel of the Gospel could be found by literary criticism through the acceptance as most valid that which is attested by the most Evangelists. His final work was an attempt to secure the fourfold Gospel which for him was the most trustworthy. In the Synoptic Gospels he gave a high credence to the triply attested portions and less to the "Double Tradition." The "Single Traditions" were the least authentic of all. Strauss also takes cognizance of the inconsistencies of the Evangelists when they related the same stories and the silence of some of the Evangelists when they all ought to have known the stories due to their importance. In fact he used these observations to discredit, satisfactorily for himself, all of the Gospel narratives that he wished to eliminate; and he seldom fell back on his a priori argument against miracles. Abbott was usually content to allow all that was left when the miraculous was eliminated, while Strauss indicts the rest for its appearance among such unhistorical material. At one place Strauss lists those points which make a narrative unhistorical. They are: inconsistency within the account; contradiction of other accounts;

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Rudolph Hagenbach, German Rationalism, p. 370.

inconsistency with reality; and conversations in poetry, hymns or in a more elevated strain than the actual training of the characters would make likely. He adds,

The absence of these marks of the unhistorical do not, however, prove the historical validity of the narrative since the mythos often wears the most simple and apparently historical form; in which case the proof lies in the substance.<sup>1</sup>

Strauss does, however, declare that where only the form of the narrative and not the general contents exhibit the characteristics of the unhistorical, "it is at least possible to suppose a kernel of historical fact . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Strauss denies the historicity of cures that may be considered natural, while Abbott accepts some, but not all, of these. Abbott accepts the miracles of healing as a class, but he will not bind himself to accept each individual instance because ". . . round a nucleus of historical acts of healing an accretion of unhistorical miracles might easily cluster."<sup>3</sup> Strauss closely followed the Hegelian philosophy which demanded that he give up many of the traditional beliefs. This philosophy rejects all notion of a Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, above and beyond ourselves; all faith in the unseen; and all hope of an individual immortality. The idea is God, and humanity at large is the Christ.<sup>4</sup> Abbott does not seem to follow Strauss here. For him,

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<sup>1</sup>Strauss, The Life of Jesus, pp. 88f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Oxford Sermons, p. xxxvi f.

<sup>4</sup>W.H. Mill, Observations on the Attempted Application of Pantheistic Principles to the Theory and Historic Criticism of the Gospel, pp. 11, 12.

Christ is the consummate Man.<sup>1</sup> Such a one could be allowed by Hegelianism to appear only at the end, not in the midst, of the historical. Their difference in philosophy makes them accept the Resurrection of Christ on different grounds, although both are unorthodox. Strauss would accept the Resurrection by resolving the historical into the ideal, making it a representation of the process of spiritual life known to all.<sup>2</sup> Abbott, who was not able to dogmatize about the existence of matter anyway,<sup>3</sup> gave up belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus' body and became "certain" of His spiritual Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> In his view

. . . because Christ's Spirit had soared up after death to the heaven of heavens and thence was bending down lovingly to look upon His despairing followers; therefore, they received power to see Him again, living for them on earth.<sup>5</sup>

In like manner, the miraculous narratives found in the Gospels are accretions which are possibly or probably unhistorical. However, they ". . . represent spiritual truth in material shapes which were perhaps necessary to make the truth intelligible to the church."<sup>6</sup> Thus, he believes that

Jesus is, spiritually, the only-begotten Son of God; the Healer of the souls of men; the Worker of mighty deliverances; who raises them that are dead in sin; who satisfied the hungry soul; who guides the Church through the Tempest;

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<sup>1</sup>TNHC, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>2</sup>Strauss, op. cit., p. 783.

<sup>3</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>6</sup>Abbott, Oxford Sermons, op. cit., p. xxxviii.

whose path is on the deep waters of sin and misery as He hastes to deliver them that perish; and who rises triumphant from death, and manifests Himself in increased power to the hearts of His disciples.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the Gospels, Abbott asserted that we know ". . . they cannot be explained away by the myth theory; we know that they point to an antecedent Tradition; and we know that their antecedent Tradition contains the record of a Life unique in the history of the world."<sup>2</sup> Hence, at this point in his thinking, while he believed it was necessary to destroy in order to build, Abbott wished to retain a great deal that Strauss discarded.

F.C. Baur observed that Strauss showed men their lack of knowledge but failed to conduct to the required new and positive knowledge, since he did not give a critique of the documents which form the sources of the Gospel History. Thus, he gave the impulse to a more penetrating examination of the Gospel sources.<sup>3</sup> Abbott followed in the wake of Strauss, and it could be said of him what Pfleiderer has said of Weisse, Ewald, Volkmar, and Holtzmann, i.e., that they especially did good work in establishing the priority of the Gospel of St. Mark.<sup>4</sup> F. C. Baur, leader of the Tübingen School of Criticism, and Strauss are said to have exerted more influence on the critical study of the Gospels than any other two writers in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The views of Baur's School appeared in England during Abbott's time, notably in the works

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Carpenter, *op. cit.*, 293.

of John James Tayler, Dr. Samuel Davidson, and Walter R. Cassels,<sup>1</sup> Abbott differed from this school in that he did not assign the origin of the Synoptic Gospels to the second century but to the first; and he placed Mark before Matthew and Luke. He also advocated a basically different approach to the criticism of the Gospels. While Baur attempted to fit the Gospels into a large scheme of the evolution of Christianity during the first century and a half after Jesus had passed away,<sup>2</sup> Abbott attempted to find evidence of an original Gospel by a critical examination of the narratives of the Gospels as we have them.

In common with Harnack and Wellhausen Abbott insisted that the Gospels as we have them are tradition which contains erroneous accounts and must not in their entirety be attributed to Apostles or eye-witnesses.<sup>3</sup> Abbott, in adherence to his philosophy, did not allow for any transcendental act of God upon nature, nor could he accept as true any record of such events in the past. He held that a correct record of past history would not contain the accounts of any action that was out of accord with his understanding of Nature and God. Ernest Troeltsch, a German contemporary of Abbott, wrote:

Modern historical reflexion consists precisely like the modern conception of Nature, in a purely scientific attitude toward facts . . . . On the analogy of the events known to us we seek by conjecture and sympathetic understanding to explain and reconstruct the past.<sup>4</sup>

In a manner similar to the scientific religious history school, represented by Troeltsch, Abbott maintained that history must

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Strauss, op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>See the third chapter.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest Troeltsch, "Historiography", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. VI, ed. James Hastings, p. 718.



contain a record of facts which accords with his philosophy of nature. In applying criticism to the Gospels in the interest of the modern world view, Abbott had much in common with the contemporary German scholarship that was doing the same thing. However, Abbott condemned the work of the majority of the German critics that had appeared over the preceding century. They had "hardened their hearts against induction" and had indulged in polemics and personalities. They laboured with prepossessions and neither exerted enough mechanical labour nor paid satisfactory attention to the classification of evidence.<sup>1</sup> Abbott, together with Rushbrooks, produced one of the mechanical aids he thought was needed in the Synopticon which gave the matter common to the three Gospels; that common to only two; and that peculiar to each one.

Working with mechanical tools and these methods, Abbott defended his belief that the historical Gospel was a non-miraculous one. His works on the Gospels attracted considerable attention, especially is this true of his article on the Gospels in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. In this work Robertson Smith either prepared the articles on the various books of Scripture, or Scriptural subjects, or put this task into the hands of others ". . . representing the recent critical research;" and this important work of reference, which had previously been so timid, "was now arrayed on the side of the newer thought, insuring its due consideration wherever the English language is spoken."<sup>2</sup> In this work, as well as in other numerous works on the Gospels and related subjects, Abbott did a Herculean service for liberalism

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Oxford Sermons, op. cit., pp. xlv ff.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Dickson White, A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom, Vol. II, p. 360.

through the dissemination of new ideas.

Thus, we have found in Abbott one who affected his times as well as one who was affected by them. We have found that he is a scholar concerning whom it is difficult to generalize due to his vagueness of general terms, his many inconsistencies, and his rhetoric and dialect in general. It is obvious that he was a liberal of the Broad Church School, and within this group he was mainly independent. He was an Idealist, but not a Hegelian; he was against miracles, but at places he seems to have avoided Naturalism; he was a liberal, but he was not a slavish follower of any other liberal; he was a Higher Critic of the Scriptures, but he was not entirely dependent on German thought, or on the thought of any one man. In relation to his times, then, we see Abbott assimilated and adapted existing thought, often giving it a coloring all his own. His aim appears to have been that of winning back to the church those who had gone from it due to their embracing of current philosophies that were apparently incompatible with Christian faith. A corollary aim was that of giving Christians a defense to prevent their giving up Christianity. These same motives prevail in his Biblical studies. The characteristic way in which he pursued his aims was to cut a path that lay somewhere between orthodoxy and unbelief.

Abbott was greatly influenced in his thought by the contemporary science, and his belief in the fixedness and universal application of the Laws of Nature greatly influenced his Biblical studies. Although he was independent in many ways, he was not independent of some of the views of his age. In spite of this, he was one of those, who, in every generation, attempts to overcome any antithesis that may exist

between Christian faith and science. He apparently assumed that science was more mature than it was; he could not foresee that some of its mandates would be modified.

### Abbott and Francis Bacon

Besides the several philosophical works of Abbott to which we have already referred, he wrote others of similar nature on the philosophy of Francis Bacon.<sup>1</sup> In these there is evidence that Bacon helped to shape Abbott's philosophical and scientific thought and that Abbott adopted much of Bacon's science. Abbott, from his nineteenth century perspective, found much to criticize in Bacon. He noted that modern science recognizes the 'working hypothesis' as an effectual aid in research while it is generally acknowledged that Bacon ignored this.<sup>2</sup> Also, he declared that one of the reasons Bacon's natural philosophy failed was Bacon's "undue neglect of the use of Imagination in Scientific research . . .".<sup>3</sup>

At one place Abbott criticized Bacon because he did not use his Reason in Religion, as much as he used it in Science. As we have seen, Abbott insisted on the use of Reason in Religion, especially in regard to the history contained in the Scriptures. Regarding Bacon's attitude, Abbott wrote,

In his anxiety to prove that Religion need not dread any encroachments from Science, he comes near

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott published: Bacon and Essex (1877), Bacon's Essays, vols. I and II (1876), Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works (1885).

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, p. 407. Abbott uses a 'working hypothesis' on his way to establishing some of his theories. An example is found in TSOM p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 409.

divorcing Faith and Reason. Faith cannot be jostled by Reason, he urges, for they move in different spheres. If they do come into collision, Reason must give way: we must believe in the mysteries of the Faith, even though it be against the reluctation of Reason.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott attempted to avoid making Bacon's error of divorcing Reason and Faith, through adjusting Faith to the dictates of Reason, where these clashed. Although Abbott appears to have been unaware of the danger of pushing Faith out of its proper place in his effort to prevent a divorce of Faith and Reason, he had observed such a divorce in Bacon, and he tried to avoid it in his own thinking.

However, there was much in Bacon that Abbott found congenial with his own outlook. He discovered that Bacon had a "genuine and intense hatred" for Romanism; he declared that wherever Bacon "writes the word, 'Superstition', we may take it for granted that he is thinking of Rome."<sup>2</sup> For Bacon two impostures in religion were "the formal or scholastic theology" and "the accumulation of legends."<sup>3</sup> Along this same line, Abbott noted that Bacon protested against the yoke of Aristotle, whose established authority in science "encouraged indolence and . . . suppressed inquiry."<sup>4</sup> Abbott found that Bacon denounced the Logic of the Schools, "in which deduction was everything and induction nothing."<sup>5</sup> Just as Bacon protested against the scholasticism of his day, Abbott protested against the same thing in his times. We have seen an example of this

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Bacon's Essays, Vol. I, p. xcvi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. cxii f.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, p. 429.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, Bacon's Essays, Vol. I, op. cit., p. lxx.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. lxxi.

in Abbott's conflict with Newman.

Also, Abbott in his Biblical criticism makes the point that he is reasoning by induction. He found that Aristotle had an induction, but it was not one that was systematically accompanied by experiment, and it often absorbed popular ideas and notions into it.<sup>1</sup> Bacon's induction was highly commended by Abbott. He declared "never before had scientific Induction been so clearly set before the world and so sharply distinguished from the 'puerile' enumerative Induction prevalent among the Aristotelians . . ."<sup>2</sup> Abbott admired many principles of the induction which Bacon advocated and he attempted to practise them in his own studies. Bacon's "direction to use, to vary, and to select experiments" will be seen, in Abbott's Biblical Studies, as a principle which Abbott followed.<sup>3</sup> Most important of all, for our understanding of Abbott's procedure, is the point that Abbott attempted to practise what he called bee criticism of the Gospels.<sup>4</sup> From Bacon's work, 'The Refutation of Philosophies', Abbott had quoted this dictum,

be not like the empiricant which merely collects;  
nor like the cobweb-weaving theorists who do but  
spin webs from their own intestines; but imitate  
the bees which both collect and fashion.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Abbott found in Bacon direction as to how to develop a scientific criticism of the Bible. He attempted to study the Scriptures by

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, op. cit., p. 341.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. xii.

<sup>5</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, op. cit., p. 369.

induction and the imitation of the bees which he found advocated by Bacon in the study of nature. Abbott carries out his study, however, without ever showing that Bacon's Induction, which helped scientists discover some of the secrets of nature, could be as successfully applied to the subject matter of the Scriptures. Here, Abbott too sanguinely applies the method of study which had yielded good results in natural science to the field of Biblical studies. He did not sufficiently recognise that natural science cannot claim to give an exhaustive account of reality and that after it has dealt with all the reality it even pretends to handle, "reality has still other sides, which only reveal themselves to the religious mind."<sup>1</sup>

Bacon's Novum Organum, the first aphorism of which proclaims that 'man is the servant and interpreter of Nature'<sup>2</sup> was viewed by Abbott as a work which diffused in its readers "the love of Truth, and the sense of Law . . ."<sup>3</sup> Thus, Abbott found in Bacon support for his trust in the Laws of Nature. However, as Abbott pointed out, Bacon allowed the dictates of religion without attempting, as Abbott did, to eliminate the miraculous from Scripture. Yet, it was not only in the science of the nineteenth century, but in that of Bacon as well, that Abbott found adherence to the Laws of Nature.

Also, it was not only in the Naturalistic philosophy of Herbert Spencer but in the philosophy of Bacon, too, that Abbott found matter

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<sup>1</sup>J. Wendland, Miracles and Christianity, trans. H. R. Mackintosh, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Bacon's Essays, op. cit., p. xc.

regarded as force. He quotes with approval Mr. Ellis' comment (on Bacon's "Wisdom of the Ancients") which declared that Bacon's theory of force was "much like the theory of Boscovich, who considered that all phenomena might be explained (without matter) on the hypothesis of the existence of a number of centres of force."<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, Abbott, at one place, took this view of matter.

Although the science of the nineteenth century had advanced beyond many of the propositions of Bacon, it also, in its inductive experiments, practised much of the philosophy of Bacon. Abbott shows in his works on Bacon that he adopted many of the teachings of Bacon into his own thought in an attempt to give a scientific theology and criticism of the Bible. Bacon helped him to formulate his thought and furnished him aid in making his philosophy explicit.

Thus, Abbott worked out his philosophical position before he applied himself to the task of his scientific criticism of the Scriptures. As we shall see, he never took as true anything in Scripture which was not in line with his philosophy. He originated and elaborated his theories concerning the Bible in an effort to find in it a message which accorded with his philosophy.

We hold that Abbott did not have the criteria by which to establish the point that miracles are impossible in the world. The 'Laws of Nature' was a term developed by science to describe a limited part of Nature. This did not include all of nature throughout eternity; the scientist's induction at this point was incomplete. Their empiricism

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works, p. 372.



limited the area of truth in which their method could be applied; they could speak on only the small part of nature which they observed, and what they said was far from exhaustive. Abbott's science did not have the power to discern the truth or untruth of matters beyond the observable. In his works on the Scriptures he was dealing with history which could not be recalled or put into motion again. Yet, before a conclusion based entirely on observation and experiment could be made, at least these things had to be done.

Abbott's philosophy was deterministic; it did not leave nearly enough place for the freedom of God. By faith we hold that God is free to act in the world He created. It is inconceivable to us that God would not be free to act in His world according to His will and in any way which was consistent with His nature. His work should not be limited to the immanent. We affirm that He is transcendent as well as immanent, and that He is free to act upon nature as well as in nature.

But we feel that Abbott, due to the dictates of his chosen science, was very much blind to the miracles of the very nature on which he wrote so much. It has been well said that

The starry worlds in time and space, the pageant of life, the processes of growth and reproduction, the instincts of animals, the inventiveness of nature, the rising and the setting of the sun, the affections and passions, the character of thought, of will, intuition, consciousness, these singly and together plunge the human mind into amazement to be in their midst. They are all utterly unbelievable, miracles piled upon miracles . . . .<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. Mcneille Dixon, The Human Situation, p. 421f.

This suggests that the empiricist who does not believe in miracles has much to explain in the natural world, a task of which Abbott was particularly unaware. The abstract "Laws of Nature" do not explain nature, it is more than the scientist's law.

We could, of course, dwell at length on this aspect of our subject, but space will not permit us. It should be stated, however, that the inadequacy of human reasoning to which Abbott pointed indicated the necessity of a divine Revelation received by faith and will. It is noteworthy that Abbott refused to follow his will and faith where science barred his way. Once we are aware of the limitations of his science we are no longer obligated to follow it beyond its narrow field. Therefore, on a priori grounds Abbott's science does not establish the fact that God is not free to act in His world as He wills. However, as we shall see, it will not often be necessary to criticize Abbott on these grounds in the pages which follow. In his New Testament exegesis and theology he had an ingenious approach to many problems, making the New Testament material present a gospel entirely in line with his science. Such a procedure led him into many errors, and it is mostly these, not his a priori position against miracles, which will have our attention. While we will disagree with Abbott at many places, his is an interesting and important chapter in New Testament study in Britain. One cannot help but admire a man who sought to bring a rapport between Christianity and the science of his time, even if many of his theories cannot be accepted.

## CHAPTER III

### ABBOTT AS SYNOPTIC CRITIC

In this chapter we are concerned with the criticism of the Synoptic Gospels which Abbott made in line with his philosophical presuppositions, in his effort to find the kernel of truth that is surrounded by the shell of error. Many of Abbott's own theories will come before us for the first time, and we shall seek to determine their merits and demerits, as well as to discover whether or not he established a reliable critical approach whereby he could discover in the Bible a gospel in accord with his science.

This chapter will be concerned with the following subjects: the authorship and date of Mark, sources of Mark, the validity of Mark, and Matthew and Luke.

#### I. MARK

##### The Authorship and Date of Mark

From external evidence Abbott felt it was clear that the names of the authors of our Gospels were assigned late. Justin Martyr, writing approximately 145-147 A.D., did not mention the names Matthew, Mark, or Luke; but this does not indicate that he quoted from sources other than our Synoptic Gospels, for in these quoted passages there is ". . . nothing to make probable or even to suggest that Justin used any other written gospel than those known to us . . . . It is quite possible that the names were given to these Gospels long after their

completion."<sup>1</sup>

The earlier, well-known, evidence of Papias (circa 13-140 A.D.) found in Eusebius H. E. iii.39, which refers to Mark as the interpreter of Peter, is inconclusive as far as Marcan authorship is concerned. On this quotation Abbott commented,

To the single evidence of Papias, derived from an unknown elder, not much importance can be attached; and it is very doubtful whether the most searching investigations will ever determine with certainty the name of the author or authors of any one of the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>2</sup>

This deprecation of the Papias' tradition concerning Mark was consistent with his view that the Synoptic writers were compilers behind whom was a tradition that had existed orally in different churches for many years.<sup>3</sup> It was consistent also with his more comprehensive view of authorship in the Bible. He explained what was meant when he referred to a Biblical work in his writings:

. . . when it is said that Samuel, Isaiah, Matthew, or any other writer, wrote this or that, it is to be understood as meaning the writer, whoever he may be, of the words in question, and not as meaning that the actual writer was Samuel, Isaiah, or Matthew.<sup>4</sup>

Today it is widely held that the author of our Second Gospel was Mark, the attendant of Peter. As a scholar has put it,

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, "Gospels", Encyclopaedia Britannica (9th ed.) X, p. 817.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 815. On the single evidence of Justin Abbott seems to accept Johannine authorship of the Revelation. (K&H, op. cit., p. 175.)

<sup>3</sup>This tradition was held to be either written or oral, but if oral, it was well established - like the Mishna of the Jews. (Edwin A. Abbott and W. G. Rushbrooks, The Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels, p. xi.)

<sup>4</sup>Ellis, op. cit., p. xxxiv.

This is the unbroken testimony of the earliest Christian opinion from Papias onwards. In an age when the tendency of Christian tradition was to assign the authorship of the Gospels to Apostles, Mark is not likely to have been named as the author unless there was very good reason to make that claim.<sup>1</sup>

It is now generally agreed that Mark is the most primitive of our Synoptic Gospels.<sup>2</sup> In Abbott's day, however, this was an unsettled question; and he was correct in arguing consistently for the documentary priority of Mark. He repeated his reasoning on this subject in several of his works, and it was based on the evidence observable when the Synoptic Gospels in Greek are studied in parallel columns. This led him to believe that a writer such as Mark would not have been above to extract from Matthew and Luke the continuous narrative found in our Second Gospel.

Abbott further argues that the popular character of Mark's Greek and his use of expressions, such as κράββατος in Mark 11.4, (that would be stumbling blocks to weak believers) indicate an early date for Mark. Such stumbling blocks are corrected in Matthew or Luke or in both.<sup>3</sup> From the internal evidence in Matthew's Gospel Abbott concluded that it was composed during the crisis preceding the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Mark preceded Matthew as we have seen; and Abbott suggested that Mark was compiled "probably before 70 A.D."<sup>5</sup>

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1Vincant Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 26.

2". . . in a modern commentary, it is no longer necessary to prove the priority of Mark." Ibid., p. 11.

3Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 802f.

4Abbott, "Gospels", Encyclopaedia Biblica, A Dictionary of the Bible, II, col. 1765, 1766; and Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 813.

5Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 813.

On this point he was probably right: "It is generally agreed that Mark wrote during the decade 60-70 A.D."<sup>1</sup>

### Sources of Mark

The Triple Tradition. The "Triple Tradition" was defined as ". . . those words and phrases which are common to Matthew, Mark and Luke."<sup>2</sup> Although the triply attested words were extracted out of narratives, Abbott believed they ". . . constitute a kind of narrative by themselves, a Tradition of the words and deeds of Christ."<sup>3</sup> This Tradition was earlier than any of our existing Gospels and exhibits ". . . the closest approximation we possess to some parts of the original narrative from which our Gospels are derived."<sup>4</sup> It could be roughly represented by the Gospel of St. Mark excluding the verses after Mark xvi.8.<sup>5</sup> Here Mark ended his Gospel because the Common or Triple Tradition ended. Abbott suggested, ". . . [Mark] scrupled to add anything to the notes and traditions which he knew to rest upon a higher authority than his own."<sup>6</sup> This "original Gospel" was entitled to greater authority than any one or any two of our present Gospels.<sup>7</sup>

The Triple Tradition was Abbott's original Gospel. Prior to Abbott many scholars, including J. G. Eichhorn in his Einleitung in

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 792.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott and Rushbrooke, op. cit., p. V.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>6</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 801.

<sup>7</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 445.

das neue Testament, 1804, had postulated a theory of such a Gospel. Allan Menzies rightly classified the Triple Tradition among the other Primitive Gospel theories.<sup>1</sup> Bernhard Weiss called Eichhorn's theory "arbitrary" and attempted, in contrast to Eichhorn, to establish the existence of a Primitive Gospel which tradition assigned to an apostle. He speculated that the *λογία* of Matthew referred to in Eusebius H. E. iii.39 was not our canonical Matthew but was a collection of sayings (including narrative) from which all the Synoptists borrowed. This, according to Weiss, was the Primitive Gospel. He observed that Eichhorn's theory after two decades "had already outlived itself;"<sup>2</sup> but Weiss' own theory was doomed also. According to Rawlinson, Weiss' theory is now "generally abandoned."<sup>3</sup> There were few adherents to Weiss' view, but among these was A. Resch, to whom we will return presently.<sup>4</sup> Here we must point out Abbott's varying views as to the origin and nature of the Triple Tradition. He wished to leave open the question whether the Triple Tradition was oral or written when it was used by our Evangelist;<sup>5</sup> however, he oscillated

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<sup>1</sup>Bernhard Weiss, A Manual of Introduction of the New Testament, Vol. II, pp. 206, 210.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 206, 207, 210, 235, 237.

<sup>3</sup>Rawlinson, "Gospels", Encyclopaedia Britannica, (14th ed.), p. 910.

<sup>4</sup>V. H. Stanton, "Gospels", A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup>J. C. Hawkins, "Probabilities as to the So-Called Double Tradition of St. Matthew and St. Luke", Studies in the Synoptic Problem, p. 96. J. C. Hawkins uses tradition in the wide sense of the Greek which he noted includes "transmission orally and by writing." He points out that Abbott used it similarly (Ibid.). In Abbott's day the theory was held that an oral original Gospel tradition was received from the Apostles; committed to the earliest Christian teachers and missionaries; and later written down in three different forms in our Synoptic Gospels. This theory long maintained its appeal in Great Britain and was defended by B. F. Westcott, A. Wright, and C. Salmon. (Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, op. cit., p. 10.)



between the two alternatives.<sup>1</sup> In one place he suggested that it may have circulated orally as short notes like the Mishna of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> This suggestion has attractions since the Gospels have a Jewish background. But it is not likely that the triply attested words and phrases of the Synoptic Gospels were oral notes which were amplified and incorporated into our present Synoptic Gospels.

Elsewhere, Abbott apparently thought of the Triple Tradition as a document. He wrote,

. . . in the Triple Tradition Matthew and Luke borrowed (independently of each other) either from our Mark, or (more probably) from some document embedded in our Mark . . . . The edition of Mark from which Matthew and Luke borrowed differs from Mark itself merely in a few points indicating a tendency to correct Mark's style.<sup>3</sup>

Here he expressed the possibility that some document may lie behind the Synoptic Gospels, and this seems to have been his prevailing stand regarding the question of an oral or documentary Triple Tradition. However, he continued to maintain that oral tradition may have influenced our Gospel records even as he proposed the hypothesis of an original Gospel written in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>4</sup> The admission that Matthew and Luke may have borrowed from Mark in the Triple Tradition more closely approaches critical opinion today<sup>5</sup> than did his earlier

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<sup>1</sup>TNTC op. cit., p. 445.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott & Rushbrooke, op. cit., p. VI, XI, XXViff.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, op. cit., col. 1965, 1766.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, *The Corrections of Mark*, p. 325f; FLTS, op. cit., p. XXXVI.

<sup>5</sup>Abbott in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* does not state how the edition of Mark used by Matthew and Luke was revised. For his view that the Mark used by Matthew and Luke was revised by a "corrector" attempting to return to the original Hebrew Gospel, see under "Original Hebrew Gospel".

view. With the Triple Tradition in mind Abbott had written,

. . . the importance of this Tradition depends upon the fact that the three Evangelists borrowed independently from it. . . the unlearned reader may rest assured that at least no suspicion of collusion or dependence between the three earliest writers of the life of Christ need impair his acceptance of the Triple or Common Tradition.<sup>1</sup>

We do not believe that our Synoptic Gospels, where they are triply parallel, are based on those words and phrases which they have in common.

Moffatt observed that this theory fails often to render the primitive source intelligible, and Salmon pointed out that one of the existing Gospels is needed in order to make the Triple Tradition intelligible.<sup>2</sup>

We accept the following explanation of the phenomena of the Triple Tradition:

The assumption that one of the main sources of the present Synoptic Gospels is to be identified with our St. Mark, or something very like it, is almost universally accepted. . . . It follows that the so-called "Triple Tradition" has been reduced to a "Single Tradition", and that many incidents of the Gospel story for which it was formerly supposed that we possessed three independent and converging testimonies, can now be based only on the authority of St. Mark.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott's hypothesis that the Triple Tradition is the basis of the matter common to our three Synoptic Gospels is no longer held by scholars.<sup>4</sup>

The Original Hebrew Gospel. First we will deal with some attempts other than Abbott's to return to a proposed Hebrew or Aramaic Gospel behind our Gospels, including the work of A. Resch to whom Abbott was

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott and Rushbrooks, op. cit., p. Vf.

<sup>2</sup>James Moffatt, An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, third and revised edition, p. 162; and George Salmon, The Human Element in the Gospels, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Norman Powell Williams, "A Recent Theory of the Origin of St. Mark's Gospel", Oxford Studies, in the Synoptic Problem, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup>This theory was followed in Abbott's day only by W. G. Rushbrook and Abbott himself, so far as I can determine.

indebted. Then we will present Abbott's hypothesis and criticize it.

Although there were distinguishing features in Abbott's Original Hebrew Gospel, his theory was far from being an entirely new one. In fact B. W. Bacon has pointed out:

The theory of Aramaic originals for the Gospels is as old as the enquiries of Papias. The mere fact that the native language of Jesus and the Twelve was Aramaic (or as Papias and other Greeks indiscriminatingly called it, "Hebrew") was enough for second-century Apologists, who in opposition to Gnostic charges of falsification endeavored to authenticate the documents, . . . . a quater-millennium later Jerome plumes himself on the discovery of the "authentic Hebrew" referred to by Papias, though what he actually possessed was only an Aramaic targum (that is, a homiletic free rendition) of our own Matthew . . . .<sup>1</sup>

The first effort to re-translate the sayings of Jesus into the Aramaic tongue was made in 1792 by Johann Adrian Bolten.<sup>2</sup> In Abbott's time similar efforts were made by J. T. Marshall, E. Nestle, J. Wellhausen, Arnold Meyer, and Gustaf Dalman.<sup>3</sup> Great advance was being made in the knowledge of the language of Palestine in the time of our Lord, by Dalman and others.<sup>4</sup> In 1877 Franz Delitzsch published his work, Die Bücher des Neuen Testaments aus dem Griechischen ins Hebräische übersetzt. Such a translation was justifiable on the grounds that it is often difficult to determine whether the underlying

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Wisner Bacon, The Gospel of Mark: Its Composition and Date, pp. 204, 205.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. Montgomery, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>4</sup>William Sanday, The Life of Christ in Recent Research, p. 65.

words in the New Testament were originally Hebrew or Aramaic.<sup>1</sup> Abbott, as well as Resch, made some use of this work.<sup>2</sup>

A. Resch also put forward the hypothesis of an original Hebrew Gospel.<sup>3</sup> We have already noted that Resch adopted the views of Weiss regarding the primitive Gospel behind the Synoptists.<sup>4</sup> Resch, however, added much more material to this proposed original Gospel. In one of his works Resch commented,

Durch Herbeiziehung der Parallelen aus den canonischen Lehrschriften, durch Vergleichung der aussercanonischen Paralleltexte und durch das spürende Zurückgehen auf den Vorauszusetzenden hebräischen Quellentext lassen sich noch Zahlreiche andere Spuren nachweisen, auf Grund deren man namentlich in allem Herrenden eine noch viel ausgedehntere Benützung der vorcanonischen Quelle zu erkennen vermag, als dies durch die Untersuchung von Weiss herausgestellt ist. Und es gehört recht eigentlich mit zur Aufgabe dieses Werkes, die Ausdehnung der von Marcus aus dem urevangelium geschöpften und durch ihn in die anderen beiden Synoptischen. Evangelien übergegangenen Texte in möglichen vollständigkeit ans Tageslicht zu stellen.<sup>5</sup>

Weiss traced only 262 verses of Mark back to the Apostolic source.

Resch traced 448 verses of Mark plus 18 parts of verses back to

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<sup>1</sup>Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 274. Schweitzer here quotes Dalman without reference to the work; ". . . it is often the case in Biblical Hebrew, and still more often the idiom of the Mishna, that the same expressions and forms of phrase are possible as in Aramaic."

<sup>2</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Clue, p. xvii; and C. C. Torrey, Review of Aussercanonische Paralleltexte, American Journal of Theology, III p. 699.

<sup>3</sup>This hypothesis is set out in his works: Agrapha, Aussercanonische Paralleltexte and Die Logia Jesu Nach dem Griechischen und hebräischen Text Wiederhergestellt.

<sup>4</sup>See under "The Triple Tradition".

<sup>5</sup>A. Resch, Aussercanonische Paralleltext, zu den Evangelien, Zweites Heft, p. 13f.

Original Hebrew Gospel as well as 813 verses plus 19 parts of verses of the 1023 verses of Matthew and 855 verses plus 17 parts of verses of the 1019 verses of Luke. Besides being the main source of the Synoptic Gospels, this proposed Hebrew Gospel was used by Paul and John and continued for many years to be known to the church writers. To varying translations of this "Gospel" are due the variations of the Synoptic evangelists as well as the countless various readings, especially those of the "western text" and the early fathers. "To reconstruct it," Ropes explained,

"all Hebraizing texts which point to a Hebrew original" may be used from the Synoptists, also the "Agrapha" besides many passages which Dr. Resch's criteria enable him to select from the Gospel of John and the epistles of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

The criticisms marshalled against Resch's hypothesis were numerous. Stanton criticized Resch for building on Weiss' hypothesis of an original Gospel which had failed to gain wide acceptance, had exceedingly little to recommend it, and was open to serious objections.<sup>2</sup> C. C. Torrey called attention to the weakness of Resch's translated Hebrew which in many passages was "made to fit the Greek exactly, but with a total sacrifice of Hebrew idiom."<sup>3</sup> This translation, Torrey concluded, had "contributed nothing of value to the discussion as to the origin of the Gospels."<sup>4</sup> Despite these criticisms, and many others

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. Ropes, Review of Die Logia, American Journal of Theology, III, p. 695.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent Henry Stanton, The Gospels as Historical Documents, Part II of The Synoptic Gospels, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Torrey, *op. cit.*, p. 699.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 703.

which we have not listed, Abbott was in part, a follower of Resch.

Abbott first presented his hypothesis of an original Hebrew Gospel in Clue. In his works prior to Clue he made some remarks concerning the Semitic background of the Gospels. There was a possibility that Mark was a translation, for ". . . some of Mark's dualities of expression might be explained as double renderings of the same original."<sup>1</sup> The phenomena of the Triple Tradition indicated that its origin differed from that of the Double Tradition. He suggested,

... the more varying language of the Triple Tradition; together with the additions and omissions of the three writers, suggests (a) independent translations of an Aramaic original; (b) occasional resemblances suggested by the general "usus ecclesiasticus"; (c) divergences created by the local "usus ecclesiasticus" or by the individual style of the editor or editors.<sup>2</sup>

In his earlier works Abbott always postulated an "Aramaic" original.

In his Encyclopaedia Biblica article on the Gospels (published a short time after Clue) he left open the question of a "Hebrew or Aramaic" original.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, he referred to Clue where he declared that the original Hebrew Gospel may have become intermixed with Aramaic words.<sup>4</sup> His decision in favour of an original Gospel written in Biblical Hebrew is due mainly to the influence of A. Resch.

In Clue he explained, "Wherever I quote from Resch without being able to verify

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 802.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 812.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1776.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, Clue, op. cit., p. xviii, footnote 3.



the quotation, my debt to him is acknowledged, as also my obligation to him for a conjecture as to the Hebrew original of the Gospels."<sup>1</sup> He believed that the opinion of "so learned and laborious a scholar as Professor Resch should help to convince people that there was no antecedent improbability in the hypothesis that the earliest written Gospel was composed in Biblical Hebrew."<sup>2</sup> However, while Resch sought to uncover parallels to the LXX translation within the New Testament and extra-cononical texts, Abbott was concerned only with such parallels in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>3</sup>

We have already observed that Abbott's original Gospel differed in its extent from that suggested by B. Weiss, and we have pointed out that Resch accepted Weiss' hypothesis but expanded the number of verses in the proposed original. According to Abbott, the Double Tradition constitutes "a distinct document from the Triple Tradition",<sup>4</sup> and he did not include it in his original Hebrew Gospel. By contrast the Double Tradition makes up a significant portion of Resch's original Hebrew Gospel. Abbott declared that our Mark contains the original Hebrew document in a Greek form, "and with a good many errors, conflations, and additions."<sup>5</sup>

The errors made in the translation of the LXX were used by Abbott as a clue whereby to distinguish the errors of translation in Mark which were corrected in the other Synoptics. Abbott, drawing an analogy

<sup>1</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Clue, op. cit., p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup>I have found only one case where Abbott seems to hold that John was acquainted with the original Hebrew Gospel (Abbott, Clue, op. cit., p. 51f.)

<sup>4</sup>See under "The Triple Tradition".

<sup>5</sup>Abbott, The Corrections of Mark, op. cit., p. 47.



between the LXX translation and the translation of his hypothetical Hebrew Gospel, pointed out that the early translations of the Old Testament were the most inaccurate and that the late versions, such as those by Aquila and Theodotion, were more accurate. Accordingly, he assumed Mark, our earliest Gospel, is more inaccurate than the other Synoptics. However, the analogy between the LXX translations and those of the Gospel breaks down at places, according to Abbott. Matthew and Luke, unlike the late "correctors of the LXX, may not have consulted an original Hebrew text." Instead, "they may have followed some of the 'many' translations already in existence, and sometimes one, sometimes another. . .".<sup>2</sup> The Corrector (there may have been more than one) revised Mark; Matthew and Luke followed him.<sup>3</sup>

We do not accept Abbott's theory of an original Biblical Hebrew Gospel; it has been amply refuted by many able scholars. Gustaf Dalman, while admitting a composition in Hebrew in the first century was not inconceivable, believed that Jesus spoke Aramaic and that the "Hebraists" must have been taught concerning Jesus in Aramaic. He added that, although a composition in Hebrew was not inconceivable,

. . . the more probable course with material already formulated by oral delivery was to write in down in the language in which it was spoken, particularly if the record were designed to afford convenient and

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, The Corrections of Mark, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 46f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

reliable material for further recital or public exposition.<sup>1</sup>

We follow Dalman on this point.

We cannot agree with Abbott's proposal that the errors of translation observable in the LXX translation furnish a clue by which we can return to the original Hebrew behind our Synoptic Gospels. There is a manifest difference between the translation made by the LXX and the translation that would have been made of the proposed Hebrew Gospel in the first century - had such existed. Perhaps the most poignant criticism of Abbott's picture of the Synoptic Evangelists and their period was made by Stanton who insisted that there was no such desire for verbal accuracy among Christians of the latter half of the first century which would have led them to turn to a Hebrew document for corrections of detail. Along this line, he pointed out:

In the case of the Old Testament, in spite of the fact that its verbal inspiration had long been an established tenet, attempts were not made to correct the errors of the LXX till a later time, either by Jews or Christians, and then chiefly (it would seem) in consequence of the use of the LXX by Christians in controversy with Jews. Moreover, any persons sufficiently well acquainted with the original language to make corrections would scarcely have confined their alterations to the few instances which can with plausibility be explained in this way, and have retained so largely in the same contexts the words of their less skillful predecessor.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, trans, D. M. Kay, p. 16. There are views to the same effect in: W. C. Allen, "The Aramaic Background of the Gospels", Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem, pp. 294-5; Moffatt, op. cit., p. 181; P. W. Schmiedt, "Gospels", Encyclopaedia Biblica, A Dictionary of the Bible, II, col. 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Stanton, The Gospels as Historical Documents, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.

It is true that the language of the Gospels has a Semitic colouring, and this is especially true of Mark. In Matthew Black's opinion "What evidence we do possess makes the assumption of Aramaic sources of the Marcan narrative much less difficult than for the non-Markan narrative portions of Matthew and Luke."<sup>1</sup> However, today "The general tendency of New Testament scholars is to reject the hypothesis of direct translation, but to recognise that Mark's Greek is 'translation Greek' or at least is strongly coloured by Aramaic tradition."<sup>2</sup> If we can no longer maintain a belief in the existence of an original Biblical Hebrew Gospel then we cannot accept Abbott's explanations of the "corrections" and omissions of Mark by Matthew and Luke; we must explain these phenomena in other ways. For Abbott, corrected Marcan words in Matthew and Luke were a more correct translation of the Biblical Hebrew text; omitted Marcan words were parts of confections which Mark had erroneously retained. The omission of "Bartimaeus" by both Matthew and Luke; the omission of the Marcan statement, "now it was the third hour and they crucified him" (xv.25); the omission by Luke of the words, "of Galilee", are examples of Marcan words omitted by Matthew and Luke because they are erroneous confections in Mark.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Clue, op. cit., pp. 43, 51, 79. The lengthy omissions of Matthew and Luke, Abbott suggested, may have been late interpolations. "It is . . . possible that some of the lengthy details in Mark, e.g. about Herod, about the lunatic, etc., may have been added to Mark subsequently to the publication of the edition of Mark used by Matthew and Luke. (Abbott, The Corrections of Mark, op. cit., p. 54f.) Rawlinson gave an explanation for the common omissions of portions of Mark by Matthew and Luke, which he noted amount to 31 verses in all. He pointed out, "It is antecedently probable that Matthew and Luke each of whom independently omit portions of Mark should omit some in common." (A. E. J. Rawlinson, St. Mark, p. xxxvii.)

In opposition to Abbott we believe that the omissions and corrections of Mark by Matthew and Luke are due to the following causes: (1) the editorial freedom of the evangelists;<sup>1</sup> (2) corruption and assimilation of texts in the course of transmission. (When we get back to the true text of Matthew or Luke, double coincidence against Mark may disappear.);<sup>2</sup> (3) Matthew and Luke's obvious desire to condense Mark's diffuse styles;<sup>3</sup> (4) the influence of Q if it overlaps with Mark at places as is suggested by some.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, we cannot explain these things as due to the translation of Abbott's Hebrew Gospel because we do not believe it existed.

Influence of Peter. The predominant view at the turn of this century in Britain regarding Peter's influence on Mark was that Mark is

in all or nearly all its parts a unity, first put together by St. Mark as St. Peter's interpreter, probably soon after the death of the latter, and therefore giving a reliable if incomplete account of the chief features of the ministry of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Julius Wellhausen attacked this dictum when he declared that the narrative of Mark did not for the most part come from the intimate friends of Jesus. Before it attained its present form it circulated by word of mouth among the common people. Harnack recognised Wellhausen as

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<sup>1</sup>Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. 182; F. Crawford Burkitt, The Gospel History and Its Transmission, p. 36; Burnett Hillman Streeter, The Four Gospels a Study of Origins, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Turner, Journal of Theological Studies, Jan. 1909, pp. 175ff; Streeter, The Gospel History and Its Transmission, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Streeter, *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup>W. Sanday, ed. Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problems, p. 20f. Streeter, *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>5</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, p. 25.

. . . a champion who has delivered us from the tyranny of those feeble and artificial theories which attempt to base either St. Mark as a whole or a great part of the Gospel upon the testimony of St. Peter.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Abbott was endeavouring to deliver scholarship from this tyranny to which Harnack refers.

As we have seen, Abbott accepted the Triple Tradition as the closest approximation to the original Gospel we possess.<sup>2</sup> However, even it had passed through several stages of development and is far removed from the original.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the life of Christ would be, in some shape, current among the Church as the common property of all, as soon as the Apostles began to proclaim the Gospel. Probably it was not, for some time, reduced to writing . . . . What would probably at first be current in the Church, perhaps for thirty or forty years after Christ's death, would be simply a number of "traditions" or oral versions of the Gospel, current perhaps in different shapes at the great ecclesiastical centres such as Jerusalem Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria, Rome, yet presenting a general affinity, and all claiming to represent "the Memoirs of the Apostles" or to be "the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

As a result, we are not obliged to suppose that "any passage which we may be forced to reject from our Gospels as false, was written by an Apostle."<sup>5</sup> Not much room is left for Petrine authority in Mark.

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<sup>1</sup>Adolf Harnack, The Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels, New Testament Studies IV, p. 136f.

<sup>2</sup>See under "The Triple Tradition".

<sup>3</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 177f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

The Papias tradition which describes Mark as an interpreter of Peter is used by Abbott to deny rather than establish Petrine influence in Mark. He wrote,

Peter is said by Papias to have had - and presumably to have required - Mark as an "interpreter", and that Matthew is said to have written his Gospel in Hebrew and the people interpreted it as best they could! What a world of misunderstanding, literalizings, materializings, exaggerations, may be implied in these two statements.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently such statements are not put forward as a preliminary to banishing Peter from the scene altogether as far as the origin of our Second Gospel is concerned. A perusal of his works reveals that Abbott accepted Petrine influence behind the following parts of Mark: the expression, "the word" (Mark iv.14);<sup>2</sup> the promise made to the followers of Jesus that they would speak with new tongues (Mark xvi. 17);<sup>3</sup> the word "fuller" may have come from a Petrine vision (Mark ix.3); the word "watch" (Mark xiii.33-7);<sup>5</sup> and Mark xiv.43-52 may be in a region of Petrine traditions.<sup>6</sup> Abbott's overall approach which enabled him to deal mainly with single words and disjointed phrases such as those found in the Triple Tradition was a most convenient one when the matter of Petrine influence behind Mark arises. The

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<sup>1</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 355f.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold IV, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold V, p. 735-8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>6</sup>Fourfold VI, op. cit., p. 503.

admission of the possible Petrine origin of these few phrases hardly gives us assurance that we have mainly an apostolic witness in Mark. If these small parts of Mark are all that we can attribute to Peter, then his voice is faint indeed; it gives only words and phrases. Complete sentences, it seems, were formulated by others.

The concordance which is never far from Abbott's hands or eyes evidently has been consulted here. His reason for saying "the word" (Mark iv.14) was "not probably Petrine" is that Peter in Acts x.36 said God "sent the word unto the children of Israel, preaching the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ . . ."<sup>1</sup> Here Abbott's insistence that conclusions be based on evidence is very apparent. This is equally true of the Petrine section, Mark xiii.33-7. There the repetition of the word "watch" may indicate a Petrine reminiscence of the bitter night of Gethsemane when Peter was told to "watch", then failing to "watch", fell in the moment of trial.<sup>2</sup> Also, the term, "alektrophonia", in Mark xiii.35 may be a result of "Peter's indelible recollection of Christ's prediction before the 'cock crow'.<sup>3</sup> Yet, at this point, although Abbott has documentary evidence on which he postulates Petrine influence, he has failed to consider other available evidence. "Alektrophonia" was a term in common use in these times. The Jews had taken over from the Romans the four divisions of the night which we find in Mark xiii.35<sup>4</sup> - 9 p.m.,

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>TSON, p. 300.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 25.



midnight, 3 a.m., and the dawn. "Cockcrowning was used as a particular hour in the night - 3 a.m."<sup>1</sup> The bare fact that Peter was connected with a common term "alektrophonia" in one context, therefore, is not irrefragable evidence that it is here a Petrine recollection. The four parts of the night mentioned in Mark xiii.35 could have come from some one other than Peter since these terms were widely used.

Although Abbott surely believed he was putting Biblical Criticism on a firmer basis - that of hypotheses backed by observable evidence, if we had followed him we would have likely taken up a position which was only a step or two away from complete denial of Petrine influence in Mark. This would have resulted from two main reasons - the meagre Petrine language thus discernable and the arguments such as the one centered around "alektrophonia" which lends itself to attack, because it fails to take into account other than documentary evidence.

Abbott, also, makes it appear that for him Petrine language and factual history are not always synonymous. The difficult word "fuller" in Mark ix.3 may come from an account given by Peter of a vision he had experienced. Evidently Abbott placed this vision in the time after Christ's earthly ministry and His crucifixion. For through it, Peter is "prepared to 'taste death', and follow his Master in glory."<sup>2</sup> One account (Mark vi. 17-29) which he believed was Petrine, he described as bearing "the stamp of consistent truth,

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<sup>1</sup>C. G. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels, vol. I, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., p. 18.

not necessarily historical truth."<sup>1</sup> That Mark xiv. 51-2 may be Petrine Abbott admits, but suggests that this should be taken metaphorically as a description of the unclothing of Peter, while John xxi.7 portrays the metaphorical reclothing of Peter after the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

From this it is clear that a passage or phrases may be Petrine and not historical truth at the same time. Abbott does not deny apostolic authority behind Mark, but the extent of such authority is unduly minimised. He could not argue a case for extensive Petrine influence; he is limited as far as any documentary evidence such as Petrine parallels to Mark in other sources is concerned. Thus we have, before the form critics, one who had practically given up belief in the influence of the apostles in the Gospels and had assigned the Gospels mainly to other than eye-witnesses.

Many people, according to Abbott, stand between us and the apostle Peter. What we receive has come through them and of all his teaching, only a few striking Petrine phrases remain. One such phrase may be "the sea" which occurs more often in Mark than in Matthew and Luke. These, Abbott suggested, may be due to early Petrine reminiscences of Peter's boat. However, in our Mark, due to the influence of the early church, the boat is a poetic expression for the church. Abbott arrived at this assumption by reasoning that,

If the primitive traditions followed by Mark, when they mentioned "Galilee", had prophecy about Galilee in view, although they did not

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., pp. 198, 200, 201.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., p. 500.

quote prophecies, then it becomes more easy to understand that those same primitive traditions, when they spoke about the "boat" and the "sea", may sometimes have had Christian hymns in view, although they do not quote hymns.<sup>1</sup>

It is apparent that Abbott almost entirely attributed our Mark not to Peter but to others. Much of Mark can be, and should be, assigned to Peter according to such scholars as C. H. Turner,<sup>2</sup> F. C. Grant,<sup>3</sup> and T. W. Manson.<sup>4</sup> Abbott has failed to convince us that Peter's influence is as far removed from our Mark as he assumes.

To be sure our fathers in the 19th century were probably wrong in attempting to attribute all of Mark to Peter. However, we insist that the testimony of Peter in Mark is somewhat more extensive and closer to actual fact than Abbott assumes. The Papias tradition is early and should be assigned more value than Abbott gave it. Yet, it is now widely recognized that there was an oral period of transmission of the Gospel before it was written down. The tension arises when we face the question of how much of the tradition we should account to the "many" eyewitnesses, leaders, and members of the communities who handled the oral tradition and how much we should account to Peter.

We have only touched on one side of the problem when we have attempted to determine the extent of the Petrine influence behind Mark. The other side concerns how much of Mark should be traced to sources

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold I, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Turner, A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, pt. iii, pp. 42-124.

<sup>3</sup>F. C. Grant, The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth, pp. 108, 111.

<sup>4</sup>"Bulletin of the John Rylands Library", XXVII, 1944, p. 133.

other than Peter. Abbott had much to say on this subject, and we now turn to a consideration of it.

The Influence of the Early Church. In Abbott's view the primitive Christian message was circulated orally at different church centres for some thirty or forty years before being written down. In his endeavour to describe the effect that these early churches had on the gospel tradition he went further back into the history of its formation than did his contemporaries. It has been concisely stated that

in the nineteenth century. . . we heard much about the primitive oral period; as in Westcott's Introduction to the Study of the Gospels (1860). This tradition, however, was constructed more or less by adding together all the details in all our Gospels, and so presupposing a lengthy narrative which the Evangelists merely excerpted, each in his own way. How such a narrative was formed, how it was preserved, and above all - what relation it had to the life of the church were problems that were never really faced.<sup>1</sup>

This is true of such scholars as B. F. Westcott,<sup>2</sup> but not of Abbott. While others of his day were going back only to a hypothetical Gospel containing the material in all our Gospels from which they imagined the Gospel writers simply chose what they wanted, Abbott went further. For him there was not just one tradition from which the Evangelists

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<sup>1</sup>B. S. Easton, Christ in the Gospels, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>"This, therefore, was the first stage in the Apostle's work - the first step in the composition of the Gospels - to adapt the lessons which they learned with Christ to the requirements of the growing church. . . . They remained together at Jerusalem in close communion for a period long enough to shape a common narrative, and to fix it with the requisite consistency." As long as these witnesses survived, "the tradition was confined within the bounds of their testimony, when they passed away it was already fixed in writing." (B.F. Westcott, Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, pp. 171, 211f.)

borrowed but several - the triple, the double, and the single traditions of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all of which received their present form during a process of oral and written transmission which lasted several decades. He could not leave the matter here; he was driven further into the history of the formation of the tradition by what he observed in its final form. "Often", he declared, "as I studied the accounts of a miracle, I could see it as it were in the act of growing up, watch its first entrance into the Gospel narrative, note its modest beginnings, its subsequent development. . . ." <sup>1</sup> One may easily imagine

what a multitude of interpolations and amplifications must have crept into the original tradition at a time when it was still young, unauthoritative, and plastic, during the first two or three generations that followed the death of Christ. <sup>2</sup>

At this time there was a natural tendency ". . . to make the tradition as full, as edifying, and as correct, as possible." <sup>3</sup> The reconstruction of this period in which the Gospel was moulded into its present shape absorbed much of Abbott's time and was uppermost in his mind. Indeed, Abbott anticipated the researches of present day form-criticism at many places.

Martin Dibelius traced the movement in Biblical studies which has issued in modern form-criticism back as far as Johann Gottfried Herder, who he considers the pioneer in the research into popular non-literary

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<sup>1</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

writing.<sup>1</sup> Among Herder's many literary labours were those which dealt with folk poetry of the ancient Hebrew, Greeks, and Romans. At one place he wrote,

Menschlich muss Man die Bibel lassen: denn die ist ein Buch durch Menschen für Menschen geschrieben: Menschlich ist die Sprache, Menschlich die äussern Hilfsmittel, mit denen sie geschrieben und aufbehalten ist; . . .<sup>2</sup>

The implications which he believed this had for Biblical literature were in part worked out by him. In Abbott we have a development of the study of the Gospels as popular folk literature which appeared prior to that found in the form-critics of today but which made many of the same conclusions.<sup>3</sup>

According to Abbott, the process of alteration to which the oral gospel tradition was subjected began during Jesus' public ministry when His metaphorical statements such as 'the second birth' and 'beware of the leaven' were misunderstood by those who heard Him.<sup>4</sup>

These indicate misconception as the habitual state of mind of the disciples, and represent Jesus as continually obliged to explain His spiritual meaning, and not infrequently obliged to rebuke their materialism.<sup>5</sup>

After Jesus' ascension such misconception continued in the church where the instruction<sup>6</sup> contained many figures of speech mixed with history.

<sup>1</sup>Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Johann Gottfried Herder, Briefe über das Studium der Theologie, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>In his theories Abbott is not dependent on his contemporary, Herman Gunkel, who made notable contributions to the subject of the early development of Biblical literature, especially of the Old Testament, but also of the New Testament. In 1888 he published Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes which dealt with the experiences of the Spirit in the primitive Christian communities. Abbott's views along this line were fully developed prior to this time in Onesimus (1882) and The Kernel and the Husk (1886).

<sup>4</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>5</sup>WNTC, op. cit., p. 442f.

<sup>6</sup>The early preachers had pupils who studied under them in preparation for baptism. (Onesimus, op. cit., p. 79.) Dibelius includes the teaching of Catechumen among the tasks of the early preachers. (Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, op. cit., p. 14.)

These were accepted as literally true by the members of the early church who were "for the most part illiterate";<sup>1</sup> for there is a confusion in the minds of the illiterate between figures of speech and facts of history.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the Gospel tradition was handled by the Jews who were not lovers nor writers of simple historical fact. In contrast, Thucydides was hailed by one of Abbott's characters, Artemidorus, as a model to all who desire to record that which has happened. But, Onesimus, another of Abbott's characters, writes of the Jews,

. . . in this nation there neither are, nor ever were, any such historians; nor is it their nature to relate things according to the exact truth. Not that they love falsehood better than truth; but the minds of their writers seem ever on the poise between figures of speech and plain sense, between hyperbole and fact. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Such an attitude towards events resulted in an intermixture of poem and history in the Jew's ancient histories until "it is impossible to tell where the poem ends and the history begins."<sup>4</sup> The constant reading of these "history-poems" had made the Jews, Onesimus remarked, "careless of truth, and I might almost say contemptuous of it, unless it abound with marvel."<sup>5</sup> This failure of the Jews to report simple fact, together with the misunderstanding of metaphor by the illiterate, were factors constantly at work contributing toward the shaping of

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



the tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Within the early church there were three activities in particular which moulded the tradition into its present form: (1) preaching, (2) debates between "new" Jews (the Christians) and the "old" Jews who still looked for the Messiah, and (3) the singing of early Christian hymns. Permeating all these activities was the desire of the Christians to find Old Testament fulfillments in Jesus.

For Abbott, as for Martin Dibelius, the pioneer of the school of form-criticism, the part played by the early Christian preachers in shaping the Gospel tradition was very significant.<sup>2</sup> According to Abbott, in the early church worship the Old Testament prophecies were read, Christian hymns were sung, and a sermon was preached. He believed that the early preachers greatly altered the tradition in their desire to prove from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ. We have a record of how Justin Martyr declared "that Jesus was born in a cave and that the ass on which He rode into Jerusalem was tied to a vine, simply because certain prophecies of Isaiah mention a cave and a vine, and because he is determined to find fulfilments of them in the life of Christ."<sup>3</sup> But these later additions to the Gospel tradition were not as considerable as those contributed by the earlier preachers,

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<sup>1</sup>Obviously, Abbott has not established the point which he needed here - that the reporters of the Gospel tradition did not give the exact truth. It is not enough to say that the ancient histories of the Jews do not report fact when we are concerned with the more recent history of the Jews - that which covers New Testament events. If we are not to accept the history of the Gospels, due to the tendency of its writers to distort the truth, we must be shown that these Jews, and not those of some other period, reported with a bias. This Abbott has not done.

<sup>2</sup>According to Dibelius preaching "was the means of spreading abroad that which the disciples of Jesus possessed as recollection.s" (Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, op. cit., p. 13).

<sup>3</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 193f.

for Justin Martyr ". . . was very much superior in judgement, learning and ability, to the great mass of Christian preachers in the first and second centuries."<sup>1</sup> These preachers greatly distorted the original Gospel message in the process of proclaiming it.

Many years before, Rudolph Bultmann declared that the gospel tradition grew up during debates between Christians and Jews.<sup>2</sup> Abbott theorized that this is true. The "old Jews" who did not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah were opposed by the "new Jews" who did. After observing the enthusiastic but ignorant Christian apologetes, as they confronted the "old Jews" in the synagogue in Antioch of Syria, Onesimus wrote this description of their activity:

As often as they have read one of the passages of the prophecies appointed to be read in their worship, first one arises and then another, water-carriers and tent-makers and leather-cutters and the like, all attempting to shew that this sentence and that sentence point to none other than Christus; and in this fashion not only do they strain the words of their prophets and enforce them to receive all manner of meanings which they could not naturally have, but also they unwittingly encourage and, as it were, vying with one another provoke their own and one another's imaginations to remember some new things that Christus did, or said, that perchance fulfil the words of the prophecy.

Hence proceeds already a manifest alteration of the doctrine of the Christians, and the more is likely to proceed.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott places the scene of this activity outside of Palestine, but he does not, at this point, go into detail about the Greek ideas which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>R. Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 83f.

were thus read into the Gospels as extensively as Bultmann does. He leaves room, however, for considerable alteration of the tradition by the addition of "some new things".<sup>1</sup> Bultmann maintains that it was "hellenistic Jewry" that interpreted the Old Testament by allegorizing it, and in the New Testament through this type of forced interpretation they sought to take from the Christian events which they described ". . . any offensiveness that might be theirs and indeed to turn the offense into its opposite, into a confirmation of the certainty of salvation."<sup>2</sup> The presentation of Jesus, the miracle worker or exorcist who made an awesome 'numinous' impression, was attributed to the same source in the belief that it was only after the growth of legend on Hellenistic soil that the figure of Jesus was assimilated to that of the 'divine man'.<sup>3</sup> Abbott defined the work of the early church in more general terms. Among the members of the early church there was a strong tendency when the Old Testament narratives were read to "find something in the life of Christ to fulfill every prediction about the Messiah and to correspond to every miracle wrought by Moses and the prophets."<sup>4</sup> From this desire there arose traditions showing how these things were true.

When the old Jews found Jesus' death as a slave upon a cross a great stumbling block to any belief in Him as Messiah, the new Jews

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<sup>1</sup>See the chapter, "Abbott as Biblical Historian" for an example of how Abbott imagined Hellenistic ideas were added to the account of Jesus' baptism.

<sup>2</sup>Bultmann, *Essays*, p. 183.

<sup>3</sup>Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol I, p. 35. On the effect of Old Testament prophecy upon the tradition, Bultmann wrote, "there is no doubt that in the earliest Church the proving of Old Testament predictions was practised, sometimes for edification, sometimes for missionary purposes, but especially for apologetic reasons." (Ibid.)

<sup>4</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 194.

"spared no pains to shew that the oracles of the older Jews themselves predicted he should be so slain. . .". From these same books they also laboured to show that it was foretold "how the Messiah should be born, and the manner of his life; and that all these predictions are fulfilled in the birth and life of their Christus."<sup>1</sup>

Another activity which had a modifying effect upon the oral tradition was the singing of Christian hymns. Since Paul and Silas sang hymns in the dungeon at Philippi,<sup>2</sup> and Pliny says the early Christians sang hymns, Abbott suggests that the early "Jewish and Graeco-Oriental" Christian congregations did too. He asks if such practice would not inevitably tend, by poetic hyperbole and metaphor, to build up fresh traditions which would give rise to miraculous narrative when interpreted literally. Such fresh traditions originated in this fashion: after the Old Testament prophecies were read there

would arise the hymn describing, in imagery borrowed from the Old Testament, how Christ had done all these things, and more besides, for the spiritual Israel; how He had spread a table for His people in the wilderness, and given to thousands to partake of His body and His blood; how Moses had merely given water to the Jews (i.e., the law) while Jesus had turned the water into the wine which flowed from His side; how Jesus had fulfilled the predictions of the prophets by curing the halt, the maimed, the blind, the leper, the deaf; how He had even raised the dead and bidden His disciples to raise the dead; how He, like Jonah, had spent three days in the darkness of the grave.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>K & H, op. cit., pp. 191-2.

Here, as in the other activities of the early church, legendary stories grew up around Jesus of Nazareth, through the desire to assimilate Him to old Testament prophecy. With the assumption that the miraculous element crept into the narratives which deal with Jesus' life in early preaching, debates, and hymn singing together with mistranslation of his original Hebrew Gospel, Abbott proceeded to extract the kernel of the original Gospel from the husk in which it is contained.

Illustration of how legends like those in the Gospel records originate and are passed on presented itself to Abbott in the several accounts of the death and miracles of St. Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was murdered in 1170 A. D. The parallels between these works and the Gospels were very striking as far as Abbott was concerned. Although he is forced to eliminate one eyewitness account in order to do so, he finds four accepted biographies of St. Thomas; he takes these to correspond to our four Gospels.<sup>1</sup> There were several smaller, less important works by writers who cannot be trusted as much as the four biographers. These were designated Anonymous and assigned numbers to distinguish them. The assumed Gospel parallels to these were the early Gospels which fell into disfavour and were suppressed, traces of some of which "we have reason to believe" are found in the variant readings of our Gospel text.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Vol. I, p. 11 and Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Vol. II., p. 308f.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas of Canterbury, Vol. II, Ibid., p. 309. Such straining of evidence to find illustrative parallels is characteristic of Abbott. It should be recognized that ". . . to interpret the canonical by the apocryphal works are demonstrably later." (C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, p. 37.)

From his critical comparison of these texts Abbott concluded that the miracles which gathered around St. Thomas were in large part traceable to the period in which stories concerning him were transmitted orally.<sup>1</sup> One example of how these traditions gradually made their way into the record is found in the writings of Anonymus V. To an early historical account which states that the Archbishop fell 'like one praying', Anonymous II added he fell 'fortifying himself with the sign of the cross.' Anonymous V developed this tradition further; 'Also, as I have learned from men's veracious report, the body, long dead, arose and signed itself, and those who stood by with the sign of the life - giving Cross, and again fell to the ground.' This was taken as proof "that a short tradition may sometimes be both vague and tame, yet more inaccurate, and more given to legend, than much later compositions."<sup>2</sup>

In general, the embellishments of the history of St. Thomas resulted from a process in which the metaphorical was made literal;<sup>3</sup> the spiritual was materialized (as when the streams of healing of mankind which proceeded from the martyr became a literal stream of water which miraculously sprung up in the crypt where St. Thomas was buried);<sup>4</sup> and French words were given the wrong meaning when they were translated into English. A parallel to this was found in our Greek

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Vol I, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Some 'monkish verses' about a fishing staff which had been bestowed on him for his 'support', "may have been interpreted - in view of the familiar 'staff of life', as a metaphorical name of bread - to mean that Providence sent the Saint a 'fat fish'. (Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury Vol. II, op. cit., p. 274.)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 289.



Gospels which Abbott believed were derived from a Hebrew or Aramaic original.<sup>1</sup>

But not only does Abbott accept these as legends which help to show how our Gospels came into being, he also takes the resulting stories concerning St. Thomas as parallels to those about Christ in the Gospels. In his estimation

Side by side with . . . acts of healing - marvellous indeed, but explicable from known causes - we find attributed to both men, or to the Providence that worked for them, acts inexplicable from any such causes, such as the change of water to wine, the instantaneous withering of a tree, the leaping or extraction of a fish out of the water to provide some special need, the stopping of the mill-wheel by itself, the multiplication of money, or of food . . .<sup>2</sup>

The instance which Abbott classés with Christ's changing of water into wine is related thus: Pope Alexander who was visiting St. Thomas became thirsty and asked for water. Due to St. Thomas' blessing upon it the water was turned into wine, a miracle which the Pope accepted only after it was performed three times.<sup>3</sup> The other miracles to which he here alludes were reported as follows. The tree under which the knights met before they killed St. Thomas later withered away according to one report.<sup>4</sup> From St. Thomas' boyhood there comes the story that the wheels of a mill miraculously stopped when he was helplessly forced toward them by a current.<sup>5</sup> A widow who gave a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 219.



denarius to a beggar who asked for it in St. Thomas' name a few minutes later found a denarius in her purse, which she knew had been empty, except for one obol.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary that we have before us these "parallels" to which Abbott above only alludes so we can observe the obvious differences between them and the Gospel miracles.<sup>2</sup> We have no account of the withering of the trees under which the Roman soldiers gathered before they crucified Christ; nor do we have any instance where someone gave money in Jesus' name and found it later in their purse. When Jesus was fasting in the wilderness no fish miraculously fell into his lap; he even refused to turn the stone into bread (Matthew iv.4). In the Gospel narratives there is no miraculous vindictiveness such as is attributed to St. Thomas toward those who delayed in paying a vow.<sup>3</sup> Absent also is any such punishment as that given Helias who, when he failed to give a particularly fat bullock to the Saint's cause, soon found the animal in a cornfield, "a putrefying carcass".<sup>4</sup> Why such things as these grew up in the community of St. Thomas' believers and do not appear in our canonical gospels is an important question which Abbott does not answer. Bultmann also has collected many stories of miraculous feeding, of walking on water, and of the changing of water into wine.<sup>5</sup> These caused the comment that ". . . apart from the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>2</sup>The slight similarities between the acts of St. Thomas and Christ may be due to the assimilation of the Saint's life to that of our Lord, a fact that would in no way diminish the historical value of the Gospel reports.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 297.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 71

<sup>5</sup>Bultmann, *Die Geschichte synoptischen Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 241-256.

evidence of man's love for the miraculous, the main conclusion to be drawn from the parallels is the restraint and beauty of the Synoptic narratives."<sup>1</sup> This applies as well to Abbott's Gospel parallels found in the works on St. Thomas. Furthermore, it has been shown that there is a tendency for oral tradition to become shorter, not longer, and to "remain in large measure the same in substance."<sup>2</sup> This contradicts the tacit conclusion that oral tradition is inevitably expanded by the addition of legend, illustration of which Abbott found in the Anonymous writers. Abbott's argument at this point is based upon incomplete induction derived from inferior writings, and his conclusion, therefore, cannot be allowed the determining significance he attaches to it.

However, Abbott's study of the documents on St. Thomas gave him additional confidence in his reconstruction method which he applied to specific miraculous accounts in the Gospels in an effort to discount them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, V., *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, p. 130f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>Acts of healing in the Gospel accounts (such as insanity, fever, and paralysis), Abbott accepted as historically accurate but not supernatural. (Edwin A. Abbott, *Silanus the Christian* p. 215) The transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the angelic vision voice at the tomb of Jesus make up three of the six miracles, other than the miracles of healing, which are included in the "original Gospel". These three miracles were held to be "not essentially supernatural". The destruction of the swine in the account of the demoniac, however, was considered to be supernatural - also the stilling of the storm, the withering of the fig tree, and the miraculous feedings. (TNTC, op. cit., p. 446.) The healing of the stammerer (Mark vii. 31-7) Abbott believed was based on Isaiah's description of the Return of the Redeemed; and the healing of the blind man (Mark viii. 22-26) may be applied mystically and typically as being an "opening of the eyes of man" for salvation. (*Fourfold IV*, op. cit., p. 59.) By relegating material in the double and single traditions to little historical significance, Abbott limited the number of miracles he felt especially compelled to explain to those in the original tradition. He attempted to describe in detail the origin of "the six or seven principal miracles attributed to Christ by all the three Synoptic Evangelists. . .". (K & H, op. cit., p. 186.)

Jesus walking on the sea and the stilling of the storm<sup>1</sup> arose (1) from a phrase in the Psalms applied by the early disciples to an occasion when they escaped damage in a storm after appealing to Jesus who appeared to them after His death in a vision;<sup>2</sup> or (2) from a Christian hymn describing Jesus visiting the church on the storm tossed sea to bring calm;<sup>3</sup> or (3) from a development within the church so as to make  $\phi\iota\mu\acute{\omega}\theta\eta\tau\epsilon$  apply not to a spirit as in Mark 1.25f, but to the wind;<sup>4</sup> or (4) from a description of the preaching of Jesus to the spirits in prison during the night of His death, an activity the early church may have attributed to Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

The miraculous expulsion of evil spirits from the Gaderene demoniac with an account of the destruction of the swine grew up within the early church. Originally it was a short account of a non-miraculous healing.<sup>6</sup> It may have been derived from an account given by the possessed man in which he understood himself to be filled with 3,000 swine which he saw depart from him.<sup>7</sup> By steps this was reported as we now have it in Mark.<sup>8</sup> Or it may have originally been

<sup>1</sup>Abbott usually discusses Mark iv. 35-41 and vi. 45-53 together. He believed there may have been actual scenes of storm on Lake Genesaret which were recorded in poetry. (Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 59.)

<sup>2</sup>TNTC, op. cit., p. 456.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 275ff. Cf. similarly J. E. Carpenter, The First Three Gospels p. 179f.

<sup>4</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 220f. J. Estlin Carpenter follows this suggestion of Abbott's on p. 169 of The First Three Gospels.

<sup>5</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 58. In regard to the historicity of the stilling of the storm, Abbott wrote, "Though I myself am almost prepared to accept it as historically accurate, yet I must acknowledge that a balance of probability is in favour of the metaphorical explanation of this miracle. (TNTC, op. cit., p. 447.) It might be explained as the result of a harmony between Jesus and nature. Jesus may have rebuked the wind at the moment when the Father predetermined in the sequence of cause and effect. (Ibid., 455.)." <sup>6</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 204. <sup>7</sup>Abbott, Philochristus, p. 133.

<sup>8</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 98f.

a description of the work of Jesus during the time between His death and resurrection when He may have been considered by the church to have worked among the enslaved of Satan and death.<sup>1</sup>

The withering of the fig tree may have resulted from the literalizing by the early church of a parable in which Jesus came to the fig tree of Pharisaism to find fruit but found none.<sup>2</sup>

The miracles of feeding (Mark vi. 29-44; vii. 14-21) were attributed to misunderstanding of metaphor of Jesus to the effect that the disciples should call Him the Bread of Life, by which He meant that His doctrine must be the sustenance of their souls.<sup>3</sup> As the disciples ministered the word, they found it multiplied in their hand so that all were satisfied. "In course of time the story of this spiritual banquet finding its way into Christian hymns and traditions would be literalized and amplified with variations."<sup>4</sup> In his latest work, while still holding that misunderstanding of poetic metaphor was involved, he suggested that in the formation of this miracle error may have arisen in part from the antedating of post-resurrectional acts and words of Christ. Jesus must have celebrated the meal connected with the Kiddush or Sanctification of the Sabbath, not only on the Sabbath but on other days as well, with strangers as well as His disciples.

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 206. In another place Abbott suggests the withering of the fig tree may be a "confused and futile account of a preliminary visit to the temple." (Fourfold I, op. cit., p. 931). The "unfruitful but leafy fig tree may have been intended to signify the splendor of the Temple" which served men instead of God. (Fourfold V, op. cit., p. 207.)

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 215f.

An account of one of these meals may have been misconstrued and confused with other accounts. Abbott postulated,

Such celebrations, when related in the language of poetic metaphor - and with allusions to such admissions of thousands at a time into the church as are described in the Acts of the Apostles - might account for much that could not be explained as the result of metaphor alone.<sup>1</sup>

In these examples it is evident that Abbott had a strong tendency to find Old Testament allusions in miraculous accounts as proof of their legendary nature. It never seems to occur to him just how improbable many of his so-called allusions are. For instance, in the accounts of feeding, behind Mark vi.34 may have been Genesis xlii:30. The gathering of the 4,000 may have been inspired by Isaiah's gathering of the scattered captives of Israel; Psalm cvii.2-5 and Exodus sv.22 may have helped also. Behind "upon the green grass" (Mark vi.39) may have been the influence of Genesis iii. 18-19; and Isaiah iiii.2-3 furnished the phrase "by hundreds and fifties" (Mark vi.40).<sup>2</sup> He has consulted his concordance for "evidence" of these Old Testament allusions. But nowhere does he explain how an untrained, unlearned, illiterate person could construct a narrative (or even part of a narrative) such as we find in Mark vi, with phrases borrowed from numerous Old Testament references. On this point Abbott is extremely unconvincing. Yet it was by such "evidence" of "allusions" that he assured himself, and

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 207. He suggested that the phrase (Mark viii.3; Matthew xv.32) which he rendered "three days remain to me" indicated that the tradition originally connected this narrative with our Lord's passion. (TNTC, op. cit., p. 452). A. B. Bruce affirms that "There can be no doubt that the meaning is 'the people have remained with me 3 days'." (A.B. Bruce The Miraculous Element in the Gospels, p. 221) It is obvious that this is an example of how Abbott found in the narrative hidden "evidence" which substantiated his theories.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., pp. 262,264,306,310.

he hoped, convinced others through his rationalistic explanations, that these miracles are constructions based on Old Testament narratives.

At many points Abbott anticipated the work of later form-critics. Although his work contains a large amount of literary criticism which was more characteristic of his age, his conclusions regarding the formative period of the tradition were never far from his mind. In fact, through his literary criticism he uncovered phenomena which helped him establish (for himself) his form-criticism. "Evidence" for a sketchy, easily misunderstood Gospel tradition was put forward in his Triple Tradition and original Hebrew Gospel. Although these were the foundation "evidence" for much of his form-criticism, we have shown they never existed. It is now seen by form-criticism that the consistency of the Passion narrative in all its essential points indicate that

. . . here we have to do with a kernel of tradition which had reached form in the very earliest times. The elements of narrative and teaching . . . came later to be gathered by way of aggregation around this central kernel.<sup>1</sup>

This differs considerably, both in material and conception, from Abbott's kernel.

Still the similarities between Abbott and the modern form-critics are remarkable. We have already pointed out some of these: (1) the belief that the Gospels we now have grew up through a process of transmission, the history of which can be retold; (2) the theory that the Gospel was moulded through the preaching and the debates

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Kiege, Gospel and Myth in the Thought of Rudolf Bultman, trans. Bishop Stephen Neill, p. 19.



of the early churches; (3) and the assumption that parallels to this formative process and to the legendary Gospel miracles can be found in other literature.

Also, in his explanation of how a non-historical Gospel miracle might contain a historical saying of Jesus, he anticipated the views of later form-critics such as Dibelius.<sup>1</sup> Abbott believed 'short sayings' of Jesus "must have caused considerable difficulty to the compilers of the earliest Gospels in their attempt to arrange them in order." Being,

Pointed, pithy, and brief, pregnant with meaning, sometimes obscured by metaphor, many of these sayings, if taken out of their context, were very liable to be misunderstood. Some compilers might think best, as the author of St. Matthew's Gospel has done in the Sermon of the Mount, to group a number of these sayings together without connection; others, as the author of St. Luke's Gospel, might object to this arrangement, and might make it a main object to set forth these sayings "in order", attaching to each its appropriate and explanatory context.<sup>2</sup>

In determining a proper location for Jesus' words, Mark's intelligence may not have been equal to his honesty. "It seems to be a peculiarity of Mark that he has often preserved a striking word or phrase uttered by Christ but by setting it in a wrong context has given an entirely wrong sense."<sup>3</sup> One example of a misplaced but genuine saying of Jesus was discovered by Abbott in the command,  $\phi\lambda\mu\omega\theta\eta\tau\epsilon$

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<sup>1</sup>Dibelius contends that there was a tradition of Jesus' words which was handed down as a collection separate from the narrative material. (Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, op. cit., p. 28.).

<sup>2</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 209f.

<sup>3</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 367, f.m. 3365 iv.1.



(Mark i.25), which he translates "be thou muzzled". In Mark iv.39 it has been taken out of its historical setting and applied to the wind.<sup>1</sup>

However, in the elaboration of miracle narratives some genuine sayings of Jesus have not only been misplaced, there have also been additions to them to make them fit into their new context. Not only was the miracle of the withered fig tree unhistorical, the reference to this miracle in the saying of Jesus connected with it in Mark xi.21 was not historical either. A parable of a destroyed fig tree and a precept about the powers of faith in uprooting a mountain or tree originally existed separately and were put together by compilers.<sup>2</sup>

On the contrary, however, this saying may be correctly placed in Mark; there is a possible explanation of why Mark put it here. William Manson has suggested that Zechariah xiv.4 may have been in the mind of Jesus Himself in Mark xi.23 and that Mark reinstated this verse in its proper historical context after it had become situationless and generalized as we find it in Q. The conclusion was made that if this reasoning is valid, it would appear that

(1). . . history in unseen ways controlled the church's tradition to a greater extent than is commonly recognized, and (2) that the development of the tradition was not uniformly away from history, but sometimes led back to historical starting points.<sup>3</sup>

The proper allowance for the control of the tradition by the history

<sup>1</sup> K & H, op. cit., p. 220f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 205-209.

<sup>3</sup> W. Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 30.

it records is missing from Abbott's works. His skepticism concerning the sayings of Jesus led him to the conclusion that the only exact sayings of Christ which we have are the "short and sharp metaphors" such as "Have salt in yourselves" (Mark ix.50). Because Mark was the least read of all the Gospels in public worship, the words of Jesus in it, as contrasted to the longer discourses in Matthew and Luke, have not been altered and expounded by the early church. The Parables of the Talents and Pounds, Abbott commented, read "like two Targumistic expositions of one saying of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> The form-critics also believe that "in the Gospels short, pithy sayings of Jesus came before the long and involved allegories, exhortations and expositions of the Law."<sup>2</sup> However, this view does not sufficiently take into account some very important factors to which F. C. Grant calls attention.

Nothing seems more unlikely than that the original nuclei of the gospel tradition were brief, proverbial, sententious sayings of the kind we read in Pirque Aboth for example, or in the wisdom literature. After all, Jesus was a prophet not a 'wise man' or scribe; and extended discourse rather than epigram or proverb was characteristic of the Hebrew prophet.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott's theory that the Double Tradition with its long sayings of Jesus is less historical than the Triple Tradition is based upon erroneous reasoning. We cannot value as inferior material the longer discourses of Jesus because they lie outside the Triple Tradition. Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet and a prophet's characteristic speech

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<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 325f. f.n. 3333d.

<sup>2</sup>F. C. Grant, The Gospels: Their Origin and their Growth, op. cit., p.55.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

includes long discourse.

According to Abbett, in addition to the false reports of Jesus' words and actions, there were others just as erroneous which grew up around His Person. The Virgin Birth of Christ was a doctrine which was originated by Greeks who, because they were familiar with the accounts of how Aesculapius, Remulus, and Hercules were born of a human mother and a divine father, assumed the same was true of Christ, "when they were called on to adore as the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> He assumes the Greeks worshipped Jesus as Son of God because they were taught to do so, but for some reason they were not told why. It was only after they were accustomed thus to worship Him that they created the story of the Virgin Birth. Such a possibility prima facie should not be taken seriously. Moreover, the Jews may have facilitated the growth of this legend through some poetic statement in which they personified Israel, and spoke of their "Messiah as being a child of the virgin, daughter of Sion, whose only husband was Jehevaah."<sup>2</sup> Before this accretion was accepted in the text, the truth should have been stated thus: "when we speak of Jesus as being the Son of God, we . . . mean . . . that His Spirit was spiritually begotten of God."<sup>3</sup> The truth contained in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is that Jesus' Spirit was begotten of God, and that Jesus "may have been the Son of God, according to the Spirit and the son of man according to the flesh."<sup>4</sup> Abbett

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<sup>1</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

the issue with his suggestion that the kernel had a statement only of a possibility rather than a simple declaration of truth; this is not the "plain answer" which he imagined the Gentile converts sought to the question of the parentage of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Rather it is Abbott's way of stating what he believed the truth must have been. Yet, if it was, Jesus is not essentially different from the rest of mankind. This comes to light in a passage where Abbott attempts to assign a uniqueness to Jesus' Birth within the limits of natural Christianity. He declared,

in all human generation there must be some congenital divine act, if a righteous soul is to be produced; and in the generation of Christ there was a unique congenital act of the Holy Spirit. That Word of God which in various degrees inspires every righteous human soul (none can say how soon in its existence) did not inspire Jesus, but was (to speak in metaphor) totally present in Jesus from the first so as to exclude all imperfection of humanity. Human unrighteousness - such as we are in the habit of attributing to human generation - there was, in this case, none. Therefore, we say that the generation of Jesus was not human but divine.<sup>2</sup>

The "unique congenital act of the Holy Spirit" only referred to the Spirit of Christ, as we have already seen; but Abbott affirms that in all human generation there must be "some congenital divine act." What would be the difference between a human being totally inspired by the Word of God (he allows for "various degrees" of such inspiration), and Jesus, in whom the Word was totally present from the beginning? If we cannot be sure how soon the Word begins to inspire man (as Abbott

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

states above) the way is left open for one to be born who was totally "inspired" by the Word from the first. It is difficult to see how such a person would differ from Jesus as He is presented here. At any rate, one who has committed himself to the belief that God created only Jesus' Spirit and that He was born son of man according to the flesh cannot in consistency declare, as Abbott does above, that "the generation of Jesus was not human but divine."

It is not the kernel that gives Abbott this interpretation of the Incarnation; it is his philosophy. This is even more evident in his interpretation of Jesus' Resurrection. The prophecy of Hosea, 'on the third day he shall rise up', may account for the legendary assertion that Jesus appeared on the third day.<sup>1</sup> The image of the "Living Bread" - apparently the only metaphor which Abbott discovered behind the Resurrection narratives - was flashed upon the disciples while they were breaking bread at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup> His criticism will not carry him beyond these suggestions of how the Resurrection narratives arose to a demonstration that they grew up within the early church without any basis in history for them. At many places he is forced to confess ignorance: "how long the visionary period lasted we cannot tell;<sup>3</sup> how the messages from Christ were conveyed, "whether by gesture simply, or by spiritual voice (as in the case of St. Paul), audible and perhaps to one, and by him interpreted to the rest, or audible to all that were in the same faithful

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

sympathy - these and other details cannot now be determined."<sup>1</sup> But there is no such uncertainty at other places. Some one probably removed Jesus' body from the original tomb,<sup>2</sup> and it decayed as do all dead bodies.<sup>3</sup>

The truth in the Resurrection accounts is that there was not simply an act of God raising Jesus from the dead but several acts of God. "The movements of the risen Saviour appear to me to have been the movements of God; His manifestations to the faith of the apostles were divine acts, passing direct from God to the souls of men."<sup>4</sup> Jesus was raised spiritually, his body decayed, and the disciples saw him in "apparitions".<sup>5</sup> This interpretation of the Resurrection finds its basis in Abbott's philosophy which allowed for the possibility of an act of God in the spiritual but not in the material realm. He has not demonstrated that the account of the Resurrection is legendary. Yet, his professed reason for giving up belief in the Resurrection, as it is described in the Gospels, is because it is based on "the feeblest of evidence."<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, the evidence is such he arbitrarily casts it aside and restates the Resurrection in terms of his philosophy. It is evident that Abbott made his criticism serve his philosophy. Wherever his criticism failed, his philosophy came to the fore and dictated what must have happened in the Gospel records.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

When Abbott has completed his task, we have a gospel which stands or falls with his world view, and we have previously shown that there is no sufficient philosophical basis for denying miracle.<sup>1</sup>

In his Gospel criticism Abbott did not allow for the existence of any reliable controlling influence within the primitive Christian communities where the oral Gospel was proclaimed. According to him, "One thing is certain, that in every case the leather-cutter will carry the day against the learned man, and the man who believes everything against the man of discretion who believes some things and rejects others."<sup>2</sup> This overlooks some important points: (1) the reverence which the first community would feel for the words and institutions of Jesus, or what were reported to it as such; (2) the tenacity of the Oriental memory;<sup>3</sup> (3) the leaders of the community and eyewitnesses of the events (cf. Luke 1.1 ) were competent to correct errors in the tradition. Such eyewitness testimony was prized as late as the time of Papias - ca. 135. "Communities do not create, especially where there are leaders upon whom it is instinctive for them to lean."<sup>5</sup>; (4) words of Jesus in the tradition itself speak against overemphasis on signs. These forces were active in the early church making it impossible for the "illiterate" to establish his ideas over the protests of the learned man, if such a

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>W. Manson, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred M. Perry, "The Growth of the Gospels", The Interpreter's Bible Vol. VII. p. 71.

<sup>5</sup>W. Manson, Op. cit., p. 27.



clash arose (an unproven hypothesis).

These safeguards within the church would help to prevent the propagation of metaphor misunderstood or misinterpreted. These metaphors which the disciples misunderstood in Jesus' day, but which were explained by Jesus, would surely on the whole be correctly explained by those who heard Him, when they passed the tradition on to others. As Abbott pointed out, the Gospels report that His hearers misunderstood some of Jesus' words, but Jesus' explanation of them has been faithfully passed down to us, as for example His explanation of the rebirth given to Nicodemus (John iii.). Abbott surely is in error when he assumes that since later commentators exegetically poeticized Marcan phrases Mark himself, or the tradition behind Mark, had these meanings originally. After summarizing the interpretations of Origen, Jerome, and Chrysostom on the anointing at Bethany, Abbott commented,

. . . it appears that poetic imagery and doctrinal motive have influenced very early writers, even that prosaic Jerome, commenting on the narratives of Anointing. It does not follow that the same two causes influenced the Evangelists themselves; but we ought to be prepared to find traces of such signs of a poetic original.<sup>1</sup>

He suggests "nard" in Mark xiv.3 may have been retained in John xii.3 as a word that "poetically expressed the offering made by the church to her Saviour."<sup>2</sup> The accounts of the Gospels are one thing and the allegorical interpretations of them many years later, by such men as Origen, is another matter. Abbott has not taken into account the

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., p. 41. ft.1

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 356. For Abbott's view of John intervening in favour of Mark see chapter on Abbott as Johanne Scholar.

the complicated process necessary to produce the Gospel tradition from allegorical documents. If we were to admit that such things as "boat"<sup>1</sup> and "hard" always had a poetic meaning originally, on what criteria could we limit poetic meaning in the Synoptic Gospels? In the case of the stilling of the storm and walking on the waves, the suggested hymn would have required time to grow up; pass from its place of origin, or in some way lose its identity as a hymn; and then be included in the Gospel narrative as a factual incident. Such a process, within communities which had the safeguards mentioned above, did not likely take place.

Abbott falsely assumes that he can charge Gospel passages he cannot accept to the church's Christological dogmatism. The presence of doctrine in a Gospel tradition is not a sign that the account comes from a people who were ignorant of the facts of Jesus' life. "It may be true to say that the church thought of Jesus theologically, but for this very reason it was compelled to know him as he had really been. The theology consisted in the apprehension of the fact."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it is now widely recognized that it is impossible to determine in the Marcan Gospel that a Christological interpretation has been imposed upon unchristological accounts. On this matter Hoskyns and Davey said,

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<sup>1</sup>Jesus' visit to the boat (Mark vi. 45-53) originally may have described His visit to the storm-tossed church. (TNIC, op. cit., p. 436.)

<sup>2</sup>E.F. Scott, The Validity of the Gospel Record, p. 175.

. . . at no point is the literary or historical critic able to detect in any stratum of the synoptic material evidence that a Christological interpretation has been imposed upon an unchristological history.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott's picture of life and worship in the early church is interesting and ingenious. It drew attention to the fact that, "long before any of our written gospels appeared, even before St. Paul began to write his epistles, the apostles and their coadjutors were proclaiming the kerygma or message of salvation."<sup>2</sup> However, due to the considerations which we have given we maintain that Abbott's account of how the Gospel was handled in the primitive church does not sufficiently take into account the work of eye-witnesses of the things reported, and their followers, who faithfully proclaimed the message they heard to others. Consequently, Abbott does not establish his theory that the early church took the 'original gospel' which accords with his science and forced their erroneous interpretation upon it.

#### The Validity of Mark

The outline of Mark was generally used during the last part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century as an historical outline of the ministry of Jesus. The 'Marcan hypothesis' which assumed that Mark, as the earliest of our Gospels, has preserved in outline the true historical framework of our Lord's ministry and

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<sup>1</sup>Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Hunter, The Unity of the New Testament, p. 22.

public activity was accepted by many during this time.<sup>1</sup> Early in our own century a severe attack upon the Marcan outline was made by William Wrede in his work, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien (1901). Jesus is presented by Mark, in collaboration with certain circles in the early church,<sup>2</sup> as the Messiah of God who guardedly kept His Messiahship a secret during His earthly ministry, and was recognised as such by His followers only after His Resurrection.<sup>3</sup> This desire to give a Messianic form to the account of the earthly life of Jesus precluded the possibility that Mark gives an undogmatic geschichte.<sup>4</sup> He found in Mark many details but only ". . . ein paar dürftige Umrisslinien."<sup>5</sup> It could not be accepted as more historical than the other Gospels.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Albert Schweitzer agreed with Wrede that Mark's outline cannot be accepted as historical: "There is a station at the end of each section of the narrative, and the connexions are not guaranteed."<sup>7</sup> In 1905 Julius Wellhausen brought his attack upon this Gospel: Mark's chronological details omit much that one needs to know in order to comprehend his message. The geographical details are often "unbestimmt: ein Haus, Berg, einsamer ort irgendwo",

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<sup>1</sup>Of course those of the Tübingen school of criticism which did not accept the documentary priority of Mark did not adhere to the 'Marcan hypothesis'.

<sup>2</sup>William Wrede, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>". . . die Idee des Messiasgeheimnisses ist eine theologische vorstellung". (Ibid., p. 66.)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>7</sup>Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 332.

and ". . . sehr selten wenn überhaupt beim wechsell des Schauplatzes eine "Übergangstation." He continued,

Die einzelnen Stücke werden oft lebhaft und zwar ohne unsachliche, bloss rhetorische Mittel vorgetragen stehn jedoch meist anecdotisch neben einander rari nantes in gurgite vasto. Sie reichen nicht aus als Stoff für ein Leben Jesu.<sup>1</sup>

More recently K. L. Schmidt in his Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu (1919), gave his negative conclusion on Mark's Gospel,

. . . imganzen gibt es kein Leben Jesu im Sinne eines sich Entwickelnden Lebensgeschichte, keinen chronologischen Auffris der Geschichte Jesu, sondern nur Einzelgeschichten, Perikopen, die in ein Rahmenwerk gestellt sind.<sup>2</sup>

The form-critics, building upon Schmidt's book which they believed opened a new era in the science of history, have more thoroughly presented its implications for our Gospels. For them the Marcan hypothesis has been exploded. His outline of events, his connecting links, his geography, and consequently, his context of sayings and actions are not as old or reliable as the stories which they tie together. They have been added by the Evangelist to short accounts, pericopae, which originally existed separately without indications of their time and place, in order to make them tell a continuous story.

Although Abbott maintained Marcan priority from the very beginning of his research, he never, in accord with the majority of scholars in his day, accepted the 'Marcan hypothesis'. Many years before this citadel of the writers of 'Lives of Jesus' was attacked by Wrede,

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Wellhausen, Einleitung in die drei Ersten Evangelien, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu, p. 317.

and by others who succeeded him in time, Abbott brought a vigorous attack of his own. His stand on this matter is made clear in The Kernel and the Husk; in his later works he develops his thought on this subject but does not basically alter it. His position against Mark was due in part to his triple tradition theory - the triply attested words of the Synoptics may represent "the 'elliptical style' of the earliest Gospel notes or memoirs."<sup>1</sup> The "errors, additions, and confluents"<sup>2</sup> in his Original Hebrew Gospel turn out, upon examination, to be the material that lies outside the triple tradition. Therefore, the original Gospel is very incomplete, and after research on the second Gospel for more than a quarter of a century, Abbott wrote,

. . . the more Mark is studied, the more his Gospel suggests that it is a narrative based on notes - conflated or elaborated in picturesque detail - of a few isolated, popular and striking actions, or descriptions, that never aimed at completeness and never attained accuracy.<sup>3</sup>

Further study confirmed him in this conclusion.<sup>4</sup> These notes were lacking in many details of Jesus' life.

Those who passed down such meagre accounts were interested only in certain specific truths about Christ, but not in the details of His earthly ministry. In Abbott's opinion,

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott and Rushbrooke, op. cit., p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, The Corrections of Mark, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Paradosis, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>TSOM, p. 278, f.n. 327a.

The Christians of these days were highly practical men, and were mainly concerned with Christ in three aspects, first, as the Giver of promises of salvation which could be obtained by "belief" and by the performance of His precepts; secondly, as the Lord from Heaven, who might "come" at any moment to establish His Kingdom on earth; thirdly, as the Fulfiller of prophecies in such a way that He not only enabled them to believe, but also gave them power to "mightily confute" their adversaries (Acts xviii.28). Mere anecdotes about Christ's journeyings and actions would find little place in early compendious handbooks of the first Christian missionaries. They might be looked down upon as treating of Christ "in the flesh" or even "after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16) until Luke came to broaden the conception of evangelistic "duty".<sup>1</sup>

The time and place of many incidents in Jesus' life may now be lost because of the early Christians general unconcern about such things.

We have already seen that Abbott believed Mark exhibits a great propensity towards finding fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy and types in Jesus' life. This desire was so all encompassing that Mark's outline, which is imposed upon his source material, is often based upon Messianic prophecy, and cannot be accepted by Abbott as a basis for a historical account of Jesus' human life.

The course of Jesus' ministry that Abbott gave in Philechristus was not in accordance with the Marcan hypothesis. He described things not literally found in the four Gospels, but we are concerned here with his general outline of Jesus' ministry. The cleansing of the Temple is put at the close of Jesus' ministry. No early Judean ministry is described as such, but room is left for a ministry of short duration

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold I, op. cit., p. 91.



before Jesus went into Galilee (after His baptism). According to Abbott's character, Jonathan, the Spirit of the Lord fell on Jesus after His Baptism "insomuch that since that time, he both speaketh as a prophet and worketh signs as a man of God." He continued, "moreover, I had speech but yesterday with some that say he is come into Galilee. . .".<sup>1</sup> Jesus kept a Passover in Capernaum just after feeding 5,000 with the Bread of Life. Instead of going to the region before Mount Hermon by the way of Tyre and Sidon, He went (twice) by crossing over the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum. On returning to Capernaum after His last trip north of Galilee, He left to go to Jerusalem by way of Samaria but was faced by armed men at the border of Samaria and Galilee. He refused to fight and instead chose to turn to Perea, from whence He went to Bethany and Jerusalem. He taught in the Temple two days after driving out the money changers. Jesus was seen by his followers in visions after His death both in Judaea and Galilee.<sup>2</sup> As far as the outline of Jesus' public ministry is concerned, he does not follow Mark or any other Gospel. Abbott's allegiance in this matter was never to any one canonical Gospel, but rather to that which he fancied lies behind them, traces of which he found in his triple tradition and fourfold gospel. He does not accept John over the Synoptics, or vice versa; he places the "original" over all the canonical Gospels. Sometimes one Gospel, sometimes another, helps him arrive at his 'original'.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Philochristus, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 335-6, 215-243, 299, 320, 408ff.

As far as the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry in Mark is concerned, "if the Fourth Gospel is right, the Three (Synoptists) have omitted altogether the first of two visits to Galilee, and have given a wrong impression about the second."<sup>1</sup> While the Synoptists give no details of an early Judean ministry of Jesus (as Matthew and Mark) or give insufficient details of it (as Luke), John is different. He

. . . gives full details of Christ's acts and sayings in Judaea, while John the Baptist was still free thus giving an entirely different impression of that second visit to Galilee which took place just before the Baptist's arrest, and which would naturally be regarded by readers of Mark as synchronizing with the beginning of Christ's public career.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott suggests how John's second visit may be made to coincide with Mark's first visit to Galilee.<sup>3</sup> If his argument is valid, Mark has indeed omitted a part of the early ministry of Jesus. Actually, Mark was alluding to prophecy when he pictured Jesus in Galilee. This is inferred from the parallel in Matthew iv.13; "and giving up his abode in Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum which is by the sea in the border of Zebulun and Naphtali." Abbott suggested,

The reason for adding these geographical details appears immediately in a quotation, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, (by the) way of the sea, beyond

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold II, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 229ff.

Jordan, Galilee of the nations; the people that sat in darkness saw a great light. . .".<sup>1</sup>

Abbott believes that underneath Mark is the influence of this same passage from Isaiah.

The parallel Mark does not mention this prophecy. But that may be explained by the fact that Mark often merely alludes to prophecy where Matthew quotes it. And Mark here - besides the preceding mention ("came into Galilee") - almost immediately afterwards describes Jesus as calling the fishermen to be apostles while passing along "by the sea of Galilee" and then as "coming into Capernaum".<sup>2</sup>

The compiler of Mark's Gospel may have had before him material which concentrated entirely upon Jesus' activities in Galilee; this may account for Mark's omission of the early cleansing of the Temple found in John. Abbott suggested,

In a Galilean compendium dealing with the Gospel in Galilee and the north, it is conceivable that two or three visits of warning to Jerusalem might be at first grouped together for convenience and afterwards confused as one.<sup>3</sup>

The withering of the fig tree in Mark may have been "a confused and futile account of a preliminary visit to the Temple."<sup>4</sup> But Abbott mentioned questions that would arise if the Johannine chronology of the Temple cleansing is accepted as authentic which he admitted he could not answer.<sup>5</sup>

The chronological position of Jesus' call to the disciples in Mark is questioned. Not only did Luke's "reminding" of the disciples

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold I, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 95-6.

(Luke x. 1-2,9-11) and Mark's Calling of the Disciples (Mark 1.16-20) spring from the same original, but both John and Luke may have attempted to overcome possible misunderstanding arising from the position of the Mark-Matthew call. Luke placed the "call" later than Mark-Matthew but John placed it even later than Luke (John xxi).<sup>1</sup> Abbott accepted John's chronology instead of that which is found in the Synoptic Evangelists. Referring to Mark he wrote,

There is always a danger that the historian, like the dramatist, treating a mass of events as a whole, may adapt the first chapter to the last chapter, without intention to deceive. Much greater would be the danger for a writer like Mark, no historian, but half summarist, half note-collector, many of whose notes would be derived from poetic traditions. If Christian Tradition declared that the Lord Jesus "called His earliest disciples from catching fish to the task of catching men," that would be true. But it would by no means follow that this definite "calling" happened at the outset of Christ's public life, or when He first drew disciples around Him. Perhaps that definite calling, bidding them cast the net out to the four corners of the world, did not come till later on, perhaps not till after the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

In Abbott's view, Luke's account of the Sending of the Seventy

". . . contains nothing except variations and confluences of traditions

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold III, pp. 32,56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-7. Space will allow us only to list certain doubtful points of Abbott's argument by which he groups all four Gospel "calls". First he denied that the Mark-Matthew account of the calling of the disciples and Luke's "reminding" of the disciples was parallel. Then he treated them together and proclaimed that the "reminding" in Luke came from a collection of traditions about the call. Also, he traced Luke's "making signs" to an original which John has made swimming. He takes John's words, "he cast himself into the sea", to mean in effect that Peter swam (John xxi.7) (Ibid., pp. 1ff., 98.) These are only two of several examples which could be given to show that Abbott's steps to his conclusions are doubtful, but it is clear that he has called in question the Mark-Matthew position of the "call" as well as Luke's "call".

given by Mark and Matthew in the Twelve-Mission."<sup>1</sup> Luke was correct in making the precepts to the Seventy later than those to the Twelve but was incorrect in not making them "a great deal later,"<sup>2</sup> the Fourth Gospel shows us how much later.

John leaves no room for us in his Gospel to place approximately any important and fruitful mission of Apostles, whether twelve or 70. If he is right in his views, we ought (it would seem) to recognise that some things recorded by the Synoptists may have been recorded out of order, placed too early, and in a setting that makes us unable to understand their spiritual meaning.<sup>3</sup>

However, Abbott in a subsequent discussion of the Sending of the Twelve and the Seventy had this to say about John's treatment of the Sending of the Apostles: "In all these varying traditions, there is nothing to disprove the supposition that John accepted the Marcan Sending of the Twelve and referred to it in the words 'I sent you to reap!'"

(John iv.38)<sup>4</sup> Here he contradicts, but does not retract, his earlier statement that John leaves no room in his Gospel to place any mission of the twelve as recorded in Mark.<sup>5</sup> In one discussion he solves a problem in a particular way, but later, in another context, he discerns a contradictory solution. Different possibilities of the course of Jesus' ministry are presented; his discussion is contradictory, and therefore inconclusive; and the question remains, "when according to Abbott did Jesus send out His disciples?"

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Clue, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, The Fourfold Gospel, III, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Fourfold IV op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>5</sup>Fourfold III, op. cit., p. 2.

He is more emphatic at other places. In his opinion John (xvi.25) ". . . gives us the impression that, before the departure of the Son to the Father, everything that Jesus had said was a 'proverb' to them. . .".<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the account relating Christ's explanation of the parable of the sower (Mark iv.10) is out of place and should come after the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> The silence of Luke as regards Mark xiii.32 Abbott suggested may have been due to the fact that Luke considered it post-resurrectional; and he accepts John's chronology of Jesus' entry into Bethany before His anointing.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious from these attacks upon Mark's chronology that Abbott played Gospel against Gospel in a disregard for their inherent value and in the interest of harmonizing them in his elusive 'non-miraculous' original Gospel. The results show a marked tendency to remove events from the visible pre-resurrection period to the (for Abbott) visionary, post-resurrection period of Jesus' ministry. This is not criticism in which the evidence presented by the Gospel of Mark is carefully given and weighed, but rather that which makes Mark fit into Abbott's theoretical scheme. Mark demands to be taken at its face value; no criticism is justified in judging it by the Fourth Gospel interpreted as the "spiritual" gospel as Abbott does, for instance, in the call of the disciples. Not only does this give a false

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 13f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., pp. 328, 346. He does not appear to face the problem of the difference between Johannine and Marcan dates of the crucifixion.

interpretation; it relegates Mark to the junk pile as one of the most erroneous treatises of all times. Mark defies Abbott here, the course of events in it is much more logical than he admits. He has failed to give evidence that Mark deserves to be so summarily cast aside.

However, Abbott dismisses Mark's place names with the same persistency as he showed in dealing with Mark's chronology. The account of Jesus' travels through northern Palestine is recorded in Mark vii.31, "From the borders of Tyre he came through Sidon to (Eis) the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis." There is an underlying truth that has been mistaken here by Mark:

. . . Although John gives no details of such journeyings he tells us, in a general way, that when Jesus had set forth the doctrine of bread in Capernaum, "Many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him."<sup>1</sup>

Abbott suggested,

We have. . . to consider the possibility that Mark, though right in the main fact namely, that Jesus did make a circuit so as to avoid Galilee - may be inexact in detail because he was influenced by Old Testament narrative. . . Mark's original may have referred to "Sidon" - or, more probably, to "Sidonia" - because the early evangelist regarded Jesus as following in the path of Elijah. But it is not likely that Jesus as a fact ever "came through Sidon".<sup>2</sup>

Mark followed his original which contained a legendary designation of locality contributed by an evangelist who preceded him. The development of legend was at a more advanced stage in this case than it was in other

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 411.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 467, f.n.3.



instances. Many traditions reached Mark with only a general indication as to where they occurred. Mark and the other Evangelists assigned the narratives a specific place and incorporated them into their Gospels.

Behind Mark i.39 and the parallels in Matthew iv.23 and Luke iv.44 there may have been the ambiguous term Perichoros which they have interpreted in their own way.<sup>1</sup> The original from which Mark iii.7,8 arose was "one of many traditions" about withdrawing which Mark placed in his Gospel and gave connecting details.<sup>2</sup> Behind Matthew xv.39, "the borders of Magadon", and Mark viii.10, "the parts of Dalmanutha", may lie phrases mistaken for place names such as "their Haven" or "the parts of the opposite coast".<sup>3</sup> Behind Mark x.i and Matthew xix.1 may have been the vague indication: "beyond Jordan the region of the nations." Joshua iii.7, the beginning of the account of Israel crossing the Jordan under Joshua, may have influenced the early church to produce a hymn in which Jesus passed over the Jordan to take Jericho in a "spiritual" capture by restoring sight to the blind. The place name in Mark x.i was the result.<sup>4</sup> Behind the variations of the location of the anointing of Jesus there may have been an original Beth Ania.<sup>5</sup> The phrase "unto the other side, unto Bethsaida" (Mark vi.45) is closely connected with the legendary feeding of the multitudes and originally there lay behind it a poetic creation of the church such as "a place of provision". Luke ix.10 like Mark vi.45 has confused

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold III, op. cit., p. 376.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>4</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 387.

the poetic phrase with a proper name - Bethsaida.<sup>1</sup>

At one place, at least, the overgrowth of legend is so great until Abbott does not even venture to suggest a possible original. As far as the healing of the Gaderene demoniac is concerned, he says that it is impossible to know.

In Abbott's opinion the Evangelists' source gave only an indefinite indication as to the locality of Gospel events or one that is purely legendary. Even if we could get back to Abbott's original, we would not write a 'Life of Jesus' based on it. The exact historical details of Jesus' life are lost forever.

Abbott's criticisms of the Marcan hypothesis are extreme, but, on the whole, they are not warranted for the following reasons. Abbott questions Mark, the earliest Gospel, by later Gospels which contain material in addition to that found in Mark. The later Gospels may make alterations in their narratives in order to accommodate this extra material, as well as to satisfy their own particular motives in writing without any desire to "correct" Mark. Actually the Marcan outline must have been highly valued by Matthew and Luke; they follow it in many places. They must have recognized that Mark dealt very faithfully with the tradition he used. It can be argued that the Fourth Gospel, which concentrates more than Mark does upon Jesus' ministry in Palestine, may possibly be more correct than Mark regarding Jesus' ministry there. Jesus probably made more than one visit to Jerusalem. Even in Mark xiv.3 it is evident that Jesus has friends at Bethany and

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 240.

Mark xiv.12ff relates that a resident of Jerusalem set apart a room in his house for the Last Supper. For these reasons John may possibly have had better information than Mark in regard to the chronology of Passion Week, e.g. as to the time of Jesus' entry into Bethany and the date of the Last Supper and Crucifixion. The reasoning, however, whereby Abbott placed many Gospel incidents at a later time than they are found in the Synoptics, making many of them post-Resurrectional, is not based upon textual evidence but upon his erroneous criticism and philosophy. His criticism assigned the long discourses to the elaboration by the early church of short sayings of Jesus, and his philosophy led him to spiritualize acts of Jesus and assign them to Jesus' Spirit acting invisibly after His Resurrection.

It is true, as Abbott pointed out, that Mark often alludes to prophecy without quoting it.

Both Matthew and Luke are concerned to show that the life and death of Jesus are properly intelligible only in the context of the Old Testament scriptures. The same characteristic, however, controls the Marcan narrative also.<sup>1</sup>

However, Marcan details of time and place should not be attributed to prophecy with the exclusion of all other possible causes, as Abbott does. For instance, he argues that Mark 1.14 was written with Isaiah ix.1-2 in mind. But other forces working together with this one may have caused Mark to begin his account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

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<sup>1</sup>Hoskyns and Davey, op. cit., p. 65.

Peter may have begun his narrative of Jesus' public ministry here, and Mark may have followed where Peter's preaching led him.<sup>1</sup> An account such as this one may have been both a fulfillment of prophecy and a historical fact. The writers of the New Testament do not, in the main, treat the prophecies of the Old Testament as a kind of pious fortune-telling, and seek to impress their readers with the exactness of correspondence between forecast and event.<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament the important thing is the correspondence of prophecy with facts:

There has been some principle of selection at work, by which certain sides of the Messianic idea are held to be fulfilled, and others are set aside. What was the principle of selection? Surely the simplest explanation is that a true historical memory controlled the selection of prophecies.<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons the Marcan outline cannot be discounted at certain places, because it may have been constructed with Old Testament allusions in mind.

Abbott's recognition that the details of Jesus' ministry may be recorded in the Gospels in allusion to Old Testament Messianic types anticipates some more recent scholarship to an extent. Place names in Jesus' travels recall to mind the travels of Moses and Elijah.<sup>4</sup>

It has been stated that

. . . critical scholarship has so far taken little account of typological and liturgical and other theological factors which were undoubtedly very

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<sup>1</sup>J. Weiss, Das älteste Evangelium, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>C.H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>C.H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 446f.

<sup>4</sup>C.F. Evans, "The Central Section of St. Luke's Gospel", Studies in the Gospels, ed. D. E. Nineham, p. 51f.

important in the production of the gospels, and also in general, that the more fully we realize the complexities and the richness of the minds of the Biblical writers, the more ready we shall be to believe that no one as yet has plumbed the full depths of this Mark's particular writer's purpose and order.<sup>1</sup>

In Abbott, however, we have one who attempted to discredit Mark's outline by establishing that it was based on the lives of Old Testament characters. He too readily assumed that legend and typology in the Gospels are to be equated; this was unwarranted.

In Abbott's opinion Mark's source material contained reports "of a few isolated, popular, and striking actions that never aimed at completeness and never attained accuracy."<sup>2</sup> This is Abbott's Triple Tradition which he has distilled from the Synoptic Gospels; it is not the source for Mark's Gospel. Mark's sources were more complete than Abbott imagined.

One point on which there is very wide agreement is that the Passion Narrative was written down early and came to the compiler as a unit. This part of Mark's source was surely not as incomplete as Abbott imagined.<sup>3</sup> Also, Abbott failed to recognize that other complexes of pericopae were probably taken over by the compiler of Mark. These included, "genuinely continuous narratives; pericopae strung upon an itinerary; pericopae connected by unity of theme."<sup>4</sup> E. B. Redlich has

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<sup>1</sup>D.E. Nineham, "The Order of Events in St. Mark's Gospel", Studies in the Gospels, ed. D.E. Nineham, p.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>This would be true even if it is allowed that Mark has modified it in some ways and added a few short statements.

<sup>4</sup>C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative", Expository Times Vol. xliii, p. 399.

given arguments for the belief that Mark 1.21-39, ii.1-iii.6, iv.35-v, 43, vi.30-viii.37, viii.1-26, xi.15xii.40 came to the compiler as units, having already been linked together. We conclude with Redlich that

Mark found in the tradition a number of separate pericopae, as well as a number of blocks of narratives connected together either by a common topical interest or by an orderly succession in time or in the form of an itinerary.<sup>1</sup>

The pericopae which contained the narratives incorporated into Mark do not fit the description which Abbott makes of Mark's "notes". They were much more complete than he assumes. In many cases they were self-contained and independent; as such, they were given order and incorporated into Mark's Gospel.

The source materials perhaps did not in every case have exact indications of the time a particular incident occurred in Jesus' ministry. But the position of some of the events could be decided by the nature of their contents. The call of the disciples was most likely to have been at the beginning of the ministry; the events directly leading to the crucifixion would be near the close.<sup>2</sup>

### III. MATTHEW AND LUKE

According to Abbott, Matthew "received" the distinction of authority of the Gospel that bears his name. Since he was a publican and a ready writer, "it was extremely natural that the first written

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<sup>1</sup>E. Basil Redlich, Form Criticism, pp. 37-40.

<sup>2</sup>R. H. Lightfoot, The Gospel Message of St. Mark, p. 27.

Gospel should be ascribed to him.<sup>1</sup> The passage quoted by Jerome as coming from the Hebrew Original of the Gospel According to St. Matthew is not found in our Greek Gospel of St. Matthew. The quotations of this Gospel in the earliest writers are frequently inexact and are never connected by them with the name of St. Matthew as the author. Abbott places the date of Matthew in the crisis immediately before the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

In the section on the Authorship of Mark we found that Abbott thought it probable that we would never know the name of the author of any of the Synoptic Gospels; however, at one place, he suggested that "perhaps" Luke was identical with a "beloved physician" mentioned in one of Paul's epistles.<sup>3</sup> He believed that Luke was written 80 A.D. at the earliest;<sup>4</sup> or the beginning of Nerva's reign.<sup>5</sup>

On the whole Abbott's conclusions regarding the authorship and date of Matthew and Luke still hold good today. He furnished a corrective of the critical thought of his day in regard to the authorship and date of Matthew. One commentator proclaimed "The author of our present Greek Gospel has always been held to be the Apostle St. Matthew;"<sup>6</sup> and followed Irenaeus (*Contra Omnes Haeres* III.1) in declaring that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome. From this evidence he went on to infer that Matthew was

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, *The Corrections of Mark*, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 813.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, *Silanus the Christian*, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 813.

<sup>5</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, op. cit., col. 1792.

<sup>6</sup>W. Trollope, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. xiv.



written between 50 A.D. and 63 A.D.<sup>1</sup> In all probability Abbott's views on this subject are more correct than those just mentioned, and we are indebted to him for helping deliver us from this older view of the date and authorship of Matthew.

Abbott was especially interested in discrediting the authorship of the first Gospel by the Apostle Matthew, thus eliminating the possibility of an eye-witness account of Jesus' ministry which contains miracles. Some outstanding scholars<sup>2</sup> do not accept St. Matthew as the author of this Gospel; however, this is by no means an indication that it should be treated in a destructive manner, as Abbott did, to rid it of its miracles.

Abbott was not justified in dismissing as accretions to the "Triple Tradition" all material in the Single and Double Traditions. Since Abbott's day the single traditions have been broken down into the proposed documents M. L, and the material that lies outside of them. This Single Tradition material cannot be cast aside as unimportant.<sup>3</sup> Much of the teaching of Jesus which "occurs in a single Gospel is as likely to be genuine as what occurs in two or in all three."<sup>4</sup> It has already been pointed out that Mark is the single voice behind Abbott's Triple Tradition, and that the Double Tradition goes back to a single source.<sup>5</sup> A singly attested tradition may be just as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. xiv-xvi.

<sup>2</sup>A. H. McNeile affirms the author "was certainly not Matthew the Apostle." (The Gospel According to Matthew, p. xxviii.)

<sup>3</sup>"So far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, we may take what L offers with good confidence that it represents authentic utterances of Jesus substantially as he gave them to his hearers." (T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, second edition, p. 43.)

<sup>4</sup>Streeter, The Four Gospels, op. cit., p. 270.

<sup>5</sup>Burkitt, op. cit., p. 132f.

reliable as the doubly and triply attested traditions. In his final and crowning work, which was an attempt to derive from all four Gospels an extensive (non-miraculous) fourfold Gospel, Abbott took the deviations of Luke from Mark to be Lucan attempts to improve on the "original Gospel" which Abbott believed was a source behind the Gospel of Luke. In these places the Fourth Evangelist intervened in favor of Mark against Luke. We shall later examine these instances of Johannine intervention. What we should see now is that Abbott discredited the historical value of Luke because of its numerous textual variations from Mark, together with the fact that it contains many singly attested miracles.

These variations are often changes in the interest of improving Mark's Greek, as Abbott pointed out in his writings. Luke should not be discounted because of its miracles. The charge that Luke is unduly fond of the miraculous cannot be maintained:

Apart from the central miracle his infancy narrative is far less miraculous than Matthew's. Nor does the rest of the Gospel support the charge. . . . Thus there seems no reason to suppose that Luke has added seriously to the miraculous element in the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

These considerations go against Abbott's grand scheme whereby he discounted narratives he was not able to accept. He might dismiss them if he desired in the interest of his science, but he did not have the documentary evidence for doing so.

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<sup>1</sup>W. L. Knox, Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity, p. 18ff.

We have seen that Abbott brought many negative criticisms against the Synoptic Gospels. He overstated the case (1) against Petrine influence in Mark; (2) against safeguards of the oral tradition as it circulated within the early church; (3) against the historical validity of Mark, Matthew, and Luke. He was apparently unable to be objective in his criticism due to his overpowering desire to derive from our Gospels a Gospel tradition devoid of miracle. The assumption that the miraculous accounts of the Gospels were accretions to the original Gospel forced him at nearly every turn to be too destructive. He argued from a bias which made him use what facts he accumulated for one end - to rid the Gospels of miracles.

Abbott accused Newman of practicing the 'art of lubrication', i.e., greasing the descent to the conclusion through a great number of finely graduated propositions.<sup>1</sup> A better term could hardly be found to describe Abbott's own approach. First, he does not accept as historical any of the Gospels as a whole; he looks beyond them for some earlier non-mythological Tradition. One would infer from his general statements preceding his inductive process that he fancied himself in close touch with such a Tradition. At the beginning of his work he boldly asserted that the Gospels cannot be explained away by the myth theory since they point to an antecedent Tradition which contains the record of a 'life unique in the history of the world.'<sup>2</sup> In order to declare that this antecedent Tradition has a record of

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Philomythus, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Oxford Sermons, p. xxxviii f.

such a unique Life, one would have to be able to read the Tradition. Abbott, on the basis of his own criticism, was hardly able to do this.

When his search for the antecedent Tradition began, he had only the Triple, Double, and Single Traditions. Laying aside as weakly attested and inferior the last two Traditions, he maintained that the Triple Tradition held out the greatest promise for the recovery of the antecedent Tradition. At this stage he had gone through two steps toward the antecedent Tradition. First he dismissed the Gospels in favour of the Traditions. Then he dismissed two of the Traditions in favour of the Triple Tradition. Even this latter could not stand, however, for it was legendary. The husk had to be taken away in order to arrive at the kernel. At this stage he began the criticism of specific narratives. He is determined not to cast any of these aside in their entirety, although he does assert that the healings are falsely reported as miracles. As for the other triply attested miraculous narratives, he does not cast them aside as being completely mythological. He insists that there is a basis in fact for these accounts and he proceeds to show us what this is. It is only when we reach this stage that he makes the story evaporate so we can see the metaphor which is its basis.

From such material the creative Christian community produced Gospel miracles; to us this seems humanly impossible. In seeking a parallel to such a process, as he imagined brought forth the Gospel miracle narratives, Abbott concentrated his attention upon the legends which grew up around St. Thomas of Canterbury. One of the weaknesses of the inductive process is that the inductor may be blind to the dissimilarities

which two sets of facts furnish together with their similarities.

This is what happened in the parallel Abbott drew between the narratives which deal with St. Thomas and Christ. He gives no careful consideration of the dissimilarities between the two accounts. These are instructive, for as one form-critic has pointed out,

the Gospels show practically no trace of the motive of miraculous self-help, of that device, so common in all cycles of legend, by which the saint or wonder worker is delivered by the divine aid or by his own magical powers from an impasse into which his own or someone else's fault has brought him. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Motivated by the imperative that these accounts must be accounted for as products of the community's imagination and misunderstanding of metaphor, Abbott could not give an impartial analysis of his material which he used in his induction.

Also, his induction was incomplete. It especially left out of consideration the accounts which were current in Jesus' time such as the "novellen" which are certainly closer in time to the Gospel records than are the St. Thomas legends. Besides, as we have pointed out, the testimony of the apostles and eye-witnesses cannot be cast aside, and authorship assigned to an anonymous, vaguely described group such as the community, in the manner that Abbott did.

But it is certainly noteworthy that we have in Abbott one who, some forty years before form-criticism arose, anticipated the method of interpretation for which this school is known. His admission of Petrine influence in Mark is hardly more than a concession to orthodoxy

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<sup>1</sup>M. Dibelius, 'The Structure and Literary Character of the Gospels', The Harvard Review, Vol. XX, 1927, p. 166.

so that men of his day would hear him out, instead of immediately casting his book aside.<sup>1</sup> On the whole the Gospel record is treated as tradition, in the sense that it is material that circulated without any particular author associated with it, as such it was taken into our Gospels. Adherence to the 'Marcan hypothesis' after the dismissal of the traditional views of Marcan dependence upon Peter would have been in Abbott's opinion an unnecessary following of authority where the evidence did not lead. Thus the way was opened for reconstruction of the history of the rise of the Gospels which involved the church communities as builders of tradition.

The errors into which reasoning by induction leads where the induction is not complete, are exemplified in Abbott's Synoptic criticism. Also, his failure to maintain in balance opposing ideas (for example, that Mark is tradition and Petrine) to the extent that his general statements infer, is obvious. His following his evidence wherever it led, even into unheard of hypothesis, is more instructive of Abbott's theories than are some of his generalisations about them. His adherence of the evidence which he selects, his ingenuity, and his collections of facts are the more attractive parts of his criticism of the Synoptic Gospels. However, he failed to establish that an original Gospel which accorded with his science ever existed.

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, the evidence which he would admit into his induction indicated only a minor Petrine influence behind Mark.

## CHAPTER IV

### ABBOTT AS JOHANNINE SCHOLAR

Abbott touched on many problems that the Fourth Gospel presents. We will handle these under four divisions: Johannine authorship and date, the background of John, Johannine vocabulary and grammar, and John and the Synoptics.

#### I. JOHANNINE AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Before Abbott's article on the Gospels appeared in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1879), strong arguments for the authorship of the Fourth Gospel by John, the son of Zebedee, were published by B. F. Westcott and William Sanday.<sup>1</sup> These and other works, notably Westcott's The Gospel According to St. John (1882) drove home this same conclusion, and it was accepted by the majority of scholars in Britain at least until the turn of the century.<sup>2</sup> E. F. Scott in his book, The Fourth Gospel (1906), assumed that the writer was not the Apostle John.<sup>3</sup> However, the conservative opinion continued to hold the field. But

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<sup>1</sup>B.F. Westcott, Introduction to the Study of the Fourth Gospel, pp. 253-264; W. Sanday, Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel, pp. 286-304 and The Gospels in the Second Century, pp. 269, 308.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor declared that there was a decided turn from the conservative position of Johannine authorship around 1920. (V. Taylor, "The Fourth Gospel and Some Recent Criticism", Hibbert Journal", Vol. XXV, p. 730.



Abbott's article of 1879 had already given to English readers a comprehensive discussion of this subject, and his conclusions were mostly negative.

Sanday had argued: (1) the author of the Fourth Gospel was a Palestinian Jew because he shows evidence in the Gospel of being well acquainted with Jewish ideas, feasts, topography, language, and the Old Testament Scriptures; (2) the author was a contemporary of our Lord who shows evidence of having lived in a time when the hope of a political earthly reign burned in the hearts of Jesus' disciples, before this was abandoned in the first century when Jerusalem was taken; (3) the author was an eye-witness who gives notes of days and hours. (4) the writer was, therefore, the Apostle John.<sup>1</sup> The external evidence concerning the Gospel in Irenaeus was accepted by Sanday. He declared that Irenaeus "must be a good authority." The earlier Muratorian Canon was heralded as the document that assigned the Fourth Gospel to its author, John the Apostle, and established it among the books of the canon.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott differed with Sanday almost completely. Here his position is very similar to that which he took toward Petrine influence in Mark. He does not discount the possibility that traditions from the Apostle John are preserved in the Fourth Gospel, but their extent is negligible. Only ". . . 3 or 4 traditions affirmed by the aged

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<sup>1</sup>Sanday, Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit. pp. 286-297.

<sup>2</sup>Sanday, The Gospels in the Second Century, op. cit., pp. 269, 308.

Apostle such as the tradition of blood and water. . . ." and all the narratives he attributes to John, the son of Zebedee.<sup>1</sup>

The internal evidence did not indicate an eyewitness account to Abbott. The words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel differ completely in their style and rhythm from His words in the Synoptic Gospels,<sup>2</sup> but they do not differ at all from the author's own remarks and observations. It seems impossible that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" should have deliberately changed them into a language very much his own. It is not likely that this work, which is more like a poem or drama than a biography, came from one of the sons of Zebedee.<sup>3</sup>

For Abbott, the Gospel's style and contents, as compared to the Synoptic Gospels, go against the possibility that it is due exclusively to the hand of the Apostle John. When he compares it with the Book of Revelation, he makes the same conclusion. Observing that there is "unusually strong evidence" that the Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation,<sup>4</sup> he reasoned that if this is indeed true, it is not likely that he wrote the Gospel as well. The commonly received date of

<sup>1</sup>ELTS, op. cit., p. 9. Abbott also believed that the sayings of Jesus found in John may have been Targumistic developments of Jesus' sayings which have come from the Apostle to us revised and altered by many hands.

<sup>2</sup>A long list of short, pregnant Johannine sayings of Jesus, very similar to those found in the synoptics has been given by Drummond. (James Drummond, The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel, pp. 17-20).

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 819.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott does not give the source of this "unusually strong evidence". External evidence to this effect is found in Justin Martyr (Dial. 31) about 140-150 A.D. and Irenaeus (Haer. 30.4, v. 26.1, 30.3). However, Dionysius of Alexandria (250 A.D.) due to the difference in style of the Revelation and the Gospels and Epistles, assigned the latter to the Apostle John and the Revelation to another John. This evidence is late, but it goes against Abbott's argument. It is beyond doubt that he suppressed it. As we shall see, he discounts most of the external evidence which is in favour of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel by the Apostle John, son of Zebedee.

the Apocalypse is 68 A.D. when John, at 67 or 68 years of age, would have a mature style. It is "a priori highly improbable" that John's style could have so radically changed; for in the two works, "the vocabulary, the forms, the idioms, the rhythm, the thought - all is different."<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the external evidence on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, Abbott discounts some and, at least partially, accepts some. He sought to establish the point that wherever the external evidence mentions John in connexion with a tradition concerning Christ, some John other than the Apostle may have been intended. The report from Papias, quoted by Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. iii.39), which mentions two Johns, who are both disciples of the Lord presents the possibility that a passage from the Johannine Gospel was communicated to Papias, not necessarily by John the Apostle, but by "elders", one of whom may have been John the "elder". Although Irenaeus quotes Matthew as 'the Apostle' (Ib. xii.1), he "appears not to quote the Fourth Gospel except as written by John 'the disciple of the Lord', or simply 'John' (Ib. xi.1,2,3,7)."<sup>2</sup> Abbott admits it is probable that in Irenaeus John the apostle was called by preference John 'the disciple of the Lord' as being 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. But the weight of this probability, insofar as it would indicate John the Apostle<sup>3</sup> is cast

<sup>1</sup>He omits any mention of the resemblance between the Gospel and the Apocalypse to which Drummond calls attention. (Drummond, An Inquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit., p.442).

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 820.

<sup>3</sup>The disciple whom Jesus loved is first mentioned explicitly at the Last Supper (xii.23). In xxi.20 and 24 he is identified as the writer of the Gospel. The traditional view identifies him with Peter in John xx.2ff. and takes him to be St. John. (B.F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 239). J.N. Sanders' article, "Who was the Disciple whom Jesus Loved?", in Studies in the Fourth Gospel (pp. 72-82), opposes the traditional view and identifies this disciple as Lazarus (p. 74).

aside when he declared,

. . . it remains an unfortunate fact that Irenaeus and Theophilus, who are the first to quote John by name, give us no means of ascertaining whether they refer to John the Apostle or John the elder, both of whom are described by Papias as being 'disciples of the Lord'. In this state of confusion we are naturally led to suspect that the two Johns mentioned by Papias (neither of whom was probably known by Papias himself) may have really been one.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott believes this is confirmed by Jerome who tells us that there were two tombs in his time in Ephesus, one being the Apostle John's and the other John the elder's; yet some considered these two persons to be identical.<sup>2</sup> It has been correctly pointed out that the real difficulty in the Papias statement, quoted by Eusebius and referred to above, is the description of the elder as a disciple (one of the μαθηταί ) of the Lord.<sup>3</sup> However, the fact that Papias referred to two men named John who were 'disciples' of the Lord is not sufficient reason for assuming that there was in reality only one 'disciple' named John. Even Abbott declared: ". . . Eusebius tells us that Papias quoted certain traditions of the non-apostolic John, distinguishing him as 'the elder' . . ."<sup>4</sup> Also, in Eusebius there is a passage quoted from Papias in which both of the 'disciples' named John are mentioned in a manner that distinguishes one from the other. Eusebius quoting Papias wrote,

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<sup>1</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., pp. 820,821.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 820.

And if anyone chanced to come who had actually been a follower of the elders, I would enquire as to the discourses of the elders, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Phillip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples; and the things which Aristian and John the elder, disciples of the Lord say. For I supposed that things out of books did not profit so much as the utterances of a voice which liveth and abideth.<sup>1</sup>

J. B. Lightfoot in Essays on the Work Entitled Supernatural Religion (1889)<sup>2</sup> recognized that the Apostle John and the Presbyter John are distinguished from one another by Eusebius. Obviously one John is listed with the Apostles and the other John is listed as the presbyter in the Papias' passage quoted above.

In the light of this evidence Abbott was not justified in assuming that Papias referred to only one John, the Elder. Part of Abbott's case for one John (not the apostle) is found in a passage where Jerome reports that there were two graves and that some who are unnamed considered these two identical. Abbott puts entirely too much weight upon this evidence from Jerome - it occurs earlier in Dionysius of Alexandria only as hearsay<sup>3</sup> - in arguing that the external evidence associates as author only one John (not the Apostle) with the Fourth Gospel. This report about the two tombs has recently been declared by good authority as "historically worthless."<sup>4</sup> Abbott concedes that

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<sup>1</sup>Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine trans. by H. J. Lawlor and J. E. L. Oulton, Vol. I, p. 99. This quote is taken from III 39.4 of Eusebius' Eccl. Hist.

<sup>2</sup>p. 144. This book is a reprinting of articles which appeared in "The Contemporary Review", from 1874-1878. The article referred to above was first published in August 1875. Lightfoot was writing against the views expressed by W. R. Cassel in his Supernatural Religion where he argued not only against the Apostolic origin of the Fourth Gospel but even against its value in establishing "the truth of miracles and the reality of Divine Revelation." (Supernatural Religion, Vol. II, Third edition. Issued as an anonymous work, but later recognized as by W. R. Cassells, p. 476.)

<sup>3</sup>Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

there is not sufficient evidence to prove the tradition (or to disprove it) leaving us to observe that he therefore gives it entirely too much significance. However, he concluded that the evidence found in Papias and Irenaeus "leaves the question of Johannine authorship unanswered and unanswerable".<sup>1</sup>

One's presupposition about Johannine authorship has much to do with what is made of the external evidence.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in support of our argument that there is more of a case for the authorship of the Fourth Gospel by the Apostle John than Abbott admitted, we believe it is evident Abbott did not attach as much significance as is due to the passage from Irenaeus. The pertinent quotation, which is not given in full by Abbott, runs as follows:

Afterwards (that is after the publication of the other three Gospels) John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, published the Gospel during his residence in Ephesus (Haer. III I.I)<sup>3</sup> . . . and he remained in the church at Ephesus till the times of Trajan (Haer. III.iii.4).<sup>4</sup>

In his endeavour to establish that John, the writer of the Gospel, in Irenaeus was always John, designated ambiguously the disciple of the Lord, Abbott omits mention of the fact that Irenaeus included

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 820f.

<sup>2</sup>"It is clear to anyone observing the protagonists on each side of the debate. . . that it is the presuppositions they bring to the evidence which are decisive." (John A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, p. 104.)

<sup>3</sup>Irenaeus, *The Treatise of Irenaeus of Lugdunum Against the Heresies*, translated by F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, Vol. I, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 87.



in his description of the John who wrote the Gospel the words: (the disciple of the Lord), "who also leaned upon his breast". In a footnote on the same page where this qualifying phrase is omitted, Abbott points out that Irenaeus in another passage (Haer., IV. XX ii) describes the author of the Apocalypse not only as 'the disciple of the Lord's', but also as the disciple 'upon whom Jesus had leaned at supper'.<sup>1</sup> He omits the evidence which goes against his conclusion but includes similar evidence to support his position. In this way he diminished the support provided by Irenaeus for apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

The testimony of Irenaeus is very significant; it comes at the beginning of the period when the information from the early readers of the Gospel is, in the estimation of a conservative, sufficiently "full and clear".<sup>2</sup> In 1935, two papyri were published - the Rylands Papyrus 457<sup>3</sup> and the Egerton Papyrus 2 - which shed new light upon the date of this Gospel. The first papyrus contains only a few verses of John (xviii.31-3, 37,38); but it is part of a codex which possibly, although not assuredly, contained other parts of the New Testament as well as John. It has been dated not later than 150 A.D., and it is

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 820, f.n.1.

<sup>2</sup>Drummond, An Inquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit., p. 72f.

<sup>3</sup>C.H. Roberts, 'An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel in the John Rylands Library', "Bulletin of the John Rylands Library", Vol. XX, p. 54.



possibly several decades earlier.<sup>1</sup> It is probably the earliest piece of Christian writing known, and the Egerton Papyrus 2 which "was written at a date not far removed in either direction from 150 A.D.", is probably the next earliest.<sup>2</sup> These papyri suggest a date for the Fourth Gospel perhaps even before 120 A.D. It is very improbable that the Rylands Papyrus is an autograph copy. Together the recto and verso parts show lacunae, additions to the text, omissions of letters, and letters whose presence or absence in the text is uncertain.<sup>3</sup> These phenomena indicate that it is the work of a copyist, certainly not of the author. Since this papyrus may have been written "twenty or thirty years" before 150 A.D.,<sup>4</sup> its presence suggests a possible date for the appearance of St. John's Gospel of sometime before 120 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

This evidence, which Abbott did not have, tends to substantiate the statements made by Irenaeus (Haer. III. iii.4) that the Apostle John lived on in Ephesus till the times of Trajan (98-117 A.D.) and that he published the Gospel while living there (Haer., III.1.1).<sup>6</sup> At least so far as they go, the Papyri indicate a date for John's Gospel when the Apostle could have conceivably been alive to write it.

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<sup>1</sup>W.F. Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Research and Interpretation, fourth edition, revised by C. K. Barrett, 1955, p. 164. Based on its palaeographical characteristics C. H. Roberts chose the first half of the second century when it "was most probably written". Sir Frederick Kenyon, Dr. W. Schubart, and Dr. H.I. Bell support this date. (Roberts, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>C.H. Dodd, 'A New Gospel', "Bulletin of the John Rylands Library", Vol. XX, p. 56. The question of this document's relation to John cannot be regarded as closed; but there seems to be good reason for the view that its author used John as one of his sources: "John therefore was in existence some little time before the date of the papyrus." (Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Roberts, op. cit., p. 54. <sup>4</sup>Barrett, The Gospel According to John, op. cit. p. 108

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. The papyri make Barrett suggest a terminus antequam of 140 A.D.

<sup>6</sup>Irenaeus, trans. by Hitchcock, op. cit., pp. 83, 86.

These together with the marks in this Gospel of an eye-witness such as i.14 and its excellent Palestinian geography (points which Abbott did not sufficiently account for on the basis of his theories), makes the argument for authorship by the Apostle John stronger than Abbott allowed.

Instead of attributing the Fourth Gospel to St. John, Abbott insisted that a tradition, which went through several stages of development before it was written down, lies behind our Fourth Gospel. The "floating tradition of the Ephesian school" gradually merged "into a definite document" - the Fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The apostolic fathers quoted this tradition. Their "apparent quotations of the Fourth Gospel" show "not so much the use of a document from the first, as rather the influence of the common atmosphere of the Asian churches."<sup>2</sup> It was to this source, not the (written) Fourth Gospel, that Abbott traced the Johannine material found in the writings of Justin Martyr. It was not John iii.3-5 that Justin (Apol. I, lxi) quoted but "the floating tradition of the Ephesian elders" when he wrote: "For Christ said, Except ye be born again . . . verily ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to reenter the wombs of those that bare them is evident to all."<sup>3</sup> When Justin wrote, "the Ephesian 'usus ecclesiasticus' had not yet come to his knowledge, or, if it had, it had not yet

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 821.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

superseded the less developed tradition."<sup>1</sup> In different writers this same tradition appeared in varying states of development. Their quotations of it furnished Abbott a picture of its movement and development. The stages of the development of this particular tradition were classified as follows:

(1) Synoptists, "except ye become as little children;"  
 (2) Justin, "Except ye be born again;" (3) a third stage is implied in I Peter 1.3,23, and iii.21, and it would run thus, "Except a man be born of the Spirit as well as water" (a protest against the Essenistic overvaluing of ablutions,) . . . (4) the inevitable transition hence was to the form in the Fourth Gospel, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," Here the authority of the Ephesian apostolic school arrested the development, which would else have issued in (5) the Clementine stage, "Except ye be regenerated by living water into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." If (6) "living" had subsequently been omitted, the development would have been completed in a sixth and last stage.<sup>2</sup>

In two articles entitled "Justin's Use of the Fourth Gospel" which appeared in The Modern Review (Volume III, 1882), Abbott further developed his ideas on this subject.<sup>3</sup> He first acknowledged that it had been argued (by whom it is not stated) that

While Justin's conceptions in regard to the Logos were undoubtedly greatly affected by Philo and the Alexandrine philosophy, the doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos was utterly foreign to that philosophy, and could only have been derived, it would seem, from the Gospel of John . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica., op. cit., p. 821f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 559-588, 716-756.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, 'Justin's Use of the Fourth Gospel', "The Modern Review," Vol. II, p. 563.

Abbott declared his opposition to this view: "it is highly probable, if not certain, that any Jew of the Alexandrine school, becoming a believer in Christ, must necessarily have accepted the doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos".<sup>1</sup> He later intimates how this doctrine may have grown up in a question,

Who . . . can fail to see that when the Christian disciples of St. Paul had been taught to recognise that Christ was God's agent from the beginning, and when they combined herewith the Scriptural doctrine that the divine agent was God's Wisdom or Word, they would inevitably be driven to say that Christ was that same Wisdom or Word, or, as the Greeks expressed it, the Logos of God, who, having been 'with God' at the creation, afterwards became incarnate on earth?<sup>2</sup>

It is from this developing tradition that Justin receives his doctrine of the Logos at a time when it had not reached the stage of development found in the Fourth Gospel. This explains Justin's resemblances to and differences from the Fourth Gospel.

In support of this theory he maintained that Justin was a connecting link between Philo and John; Justin therefore borrows from Philo instead of John. Abbott believed that a mere mention of the names given the Logos in Justin and Philo is enough to prove that the former borrowed from the latter. From Philo's works Abbott gathered the following names for God's first - born Logos: 'Angel, Eldest, as it were Archangel', 'Beginning', 'Name of God', 'Logos, the man according to the (Divine) Image', and Israel seeing (God). Then,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

after listing more Philonian names, he listed those from Justin which were applied to Christ: "the Beginning, Logos-Power, the glory of the Lord, Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, and Logos, and 'Israel' . . .".<sup>1</sup> These lists indicate that Philo and Justin used a similar language; but they do not prove that Justin borrowed from Philo, to the exclusion of the Fourth Gospel, which is the point Abbott sought to make. Abbott gives no instance where Justin quotes a work by Philo. Arguments based upon lists of words are not as convincing to others as they apparently are to Abbott. Thorough examination of each word's context and meaning is necessary in order to establish one writer's relation to another.

Abbott also observed that  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$  is common in Philo but is not found in the New Testament. He gives one instance where this same term is used by Justin in reference to Christ (I Apol. 58, 'God the maker, and the First-begotten Christ', τοῦ  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$   $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  ). Then, after admitting that Justin elsewhere uses the more orthodox  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\acute{o}\tau\omicron\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ , he concludes that  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma$  and the above uses of Philonian terms by Justin show that "the Logos-theory and vocabulary had not yet become defined".<sup>2</sup> However, there is evidence in Justin's writings of a doctrine of the incarnation that is more in line with that found in the Fourth Gospel than is Abbott's illustration above. Justin indicates that Jesus' Sonship was of a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 570.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 571. This does not show that it had not been clearly defined as far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned.

special kind, and that it was limited to Jesus alone: Ἰησοῦς

Χριστός μόνος ἰσίως τῷ θεῷ γεγέννηται λόγος

αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχων... (I Apol. 23.2) and ὅς ἐστι υἱὸς ἐκείνου,  
ὁ μόνος λεγόμενος κυρίως υἱὸς ὁ λόγος (II Apol. 6.5 (6).3)<sup>1</sup>

The use of the Fourth Gospel by Justin should be decided by the available evidence; and Abbott did not give due consideration to the resemblance between the Fourth Gospel and Justin in the above quotations.<sup>2</sup>

As far as Justin's use of Philo is concerned, a point on which Abbott insists, it is impossible to prove that Justin was consciously borrowing his ideas about the Logos from Philo since a doctrine of the Logos was current in the philosophical schools of his time.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Abbott's conclusion was:

Justin's theory of the Logos is that which any Christian student of the school of Philo might naturally have formed, when first the Philonian doctrine was vivified by the recognition of the Incarnation of the Logos and the identification of the Logos with the Messiah.<sup>4</sup>

The point at stake, however, is whether or not Justin was influenced by John in the development of his ideas about the Logos. There are passages in his writings, not specifically given by Abbott, which tend to indicate that Justin was influenced by John.

When Justin's writings and the Fourth Gospel are compared, the

<sup>1</sup>J. Drummond, "Justin Martyr and the Fourth Gospel", The Theological Review, Vol. xiv, 1877, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>Earlier Abbott had discussed the quotation above from I Apology 23.2 attempting to show that the thought it expresses comes from Philo. His argument that this could have come from Philo does not fully take into account the difference between Philo and John. Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 823f.

<sup>3</sup>A.W.F. Blunt, The Apologies of Justin Martyr, p. xxi.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, "Justin's Use of the Fourth Gospel", op. cit., p. 573.



difference in methods and environments should be kept in mind. "The author of the Fourth Gospel did not address himself directly to pagans and so was not concerned to express himself in a conciliatory manner to them. . .". But the Apologists who addressed themselves toward the pagans were often conciliatory in their approach.<sup>1</sup> That whis would go a long way toward explaining some of the differences between Justin's apologies<sup>2</sup> and the Fourth Gospel is a point which Abbott does not bring out. Also, the possible early close association between the heretical sects and the Fourth Gospel may help to explain the vagueness of Justin's allusions to it.<sup>3</sup> Abbott held that Justin's use of the introduction, "Christ siad" (I Apology 61), to the passage which is an alleged parallet to John iii.3-5 (instead of the introduction which he often uses for passages from Matthew such as 'memoirs of the Apostles' or 'the words of Christ'), indicates that Justin was quoting John as a tradition instead of a document. This may be countered by the consideration that John, at this early date espoused by heretics, might be alluded to in this manner. At any rate, the evidence here is not conclusive of the fact that Justin was quoting tradition when he used the preface, "Christ said". The similar statement, "Jesus Christ said", precedes exact quotations of Matthew xi.27, Luke x.22, and Luke xviii.27; and the

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<sup>1</sup>J.N. Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, p.20f.

<sup>2</sup>Trypho (in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho) was brought up in a Gentile culture. He says, "I was taught in Argos by Corinthus of the school of Socrates." (Dialogue i.2) (A. Lukyn Williams, Justin Martyr the Dialogue with Trypho, p. xxiv.)

<sup>3</sup>If 'the Fourth Gospel was first brought to Rome by the Quartodecimans of the Valentinians, both the Roman reluctance to accept it as an apostolic work and the vagueness of Justin's allusions to it are easily understood." (Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, op. cit., p. 32.)



phrase, "for also our Christ had said" (Dial. 49) is used before a passage from Matthew.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott's hypothesis that Justin quoted not John's Gospel but the Ephesian elder's tradition is interesting but is hardly acceptable.<sup>2</sup> There are entirely too many unsound assumptions behind Abbott's theories here. It is highly improbable that John's (and Justin's) doctrine of regeneration developed from Matthew xviii.3. James Drummond, in a publication which preceded Abbott's articles on Justin, listed several characteristics peculiar to the Johannine passage which distinguish it from Matthew.<sup>3</sup> His conclusion was: "in all that is really characteristic of the passage in Justin he (Justin) agrees substantially, though not in words, with John."<sup>4</sup> The central thought here - the idea of birth

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, 'Justin's Use of the Fourth Gospel', op. cit., pp. 737-740.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter III, "Influence of the Early Church", for arguments against Abbott's denial of Apostolic authority to our canonical Gospels and his insistence that much in our Gospels must be assigned to the early church.

<sup>3</sup>James Drummond, 'On the Alleged Quotation From the Fourth Gospel, Relating to the New Birth, in Justin Martyr', "The Theological Review", Vol. XII, 1875, p. 479f. Drummond is opposing the opinion of Dr. Adolph Hilgenfeld in his Einleitung in das Neue Testament that the Justin passage on regeneration is more closely related to Matthew xviii.3 than to John iii.3. Abbott does not indicate that he was influenced by Hilgenfeld at this point; however, he places Justin's development of this thought next to Matthew's doctrine and that of the Fourth Gospel two steps further down the line, thus adhering rather closely to Hilgenfeld's theory.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 480. Some of the Johannine and Justinian characteristics not found in Matthew are: (1) the application of the idea of birth to spiritual change, (2) the idea that this birth is a re-birth, one in addition to the physical birth, and (3) the expression of these thoughts in connection with Baptism. (Ibid., p. 479.).

as applied to spiritual change - is characteristically Johannine and "certainly is not in Matthew xviii."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is not probable that Justin's doctrine of regeneration depends upon this passage in Matthew. Also, an analysis of the Johannine doctrines in Justin as compared to the Gospel shows evidence that in the former there has been a development and an elaboration of the latter. The Gospel gives the simple proposition that "the Logos was God"; but in Justin we have "a series of elaborate and clearly formulated doctrines, supported by argument and comment . . .".<sup>2</sup> It is conceivable that John's Gospel, not a tradition, was commented upon by Justin. Abbott believed Justin's Logos doctrine was half-way between Philo's and St. John's. The difference between John's and Justin's Logos doctrine may be due instead to Justin's elaboration (before non-Christians) of John's pregnant statement, "the Logos was God".

Another assumption upon which Abbott bases his theory that Justin refers in his alleged Johannine parallels to a "floating tradition" is that the quotations from the early church Fathers and the variant textual readings furnish evidence of a developing tradition which is found in various stages of development in Justin and in John. Behind John iii.3 and Matthew xviii.3 and the Synoptic parallels there may have been "some Aramaic word meaning 'to be born again'".<sup>3</sup> The variant readings in the New Testament and the Church Fathers furnish evidence for Abbott of a floating tradition, in which the Fourth Gospel

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>James Drummond, 'Justin Martyr and the Fourth Gospel', "The Theological Review", Vol. XIV, 1877, p. 161f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 750.

deviated much more than did Justin from the Synoptic Tradition.<sup>1</sup> The writings of the Fathers do indicate a gradual growth in the acceptance of Johannine language. But their writings can hardly be taken as a record of this developing tradition which preceded the Gospel of John and out of which John resulted. The evidence of the early date of this Gospel goes against this theory. A scholar who maintains that the apologist's teaching is in origin independent of the Fourth Gospel explains their deviations from the Gospel without recourse to Abbott's theory at this point. In his view ". . . the influence of the Fourth Gospel gradually grows and impresses on common terms the 'nuances' which they have in the Gospel and do not always have in the writings of the earlier apologists."<sup>2</sup> Scholars still disagree on the question of whether or not Justin made use of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>3</sup> Apparently there is evidence to support both positions. However, we have endeavoured to show that there are strong reasons not recognised by Abbott for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 750, 751.

<sup>2</sup>Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>J. N. Sanders concludes that Justin's teaching "is in origin independent" of the Fourth Gospel, and he states that the similarity between Apol. 61.4 and John iii.3-5 may be due to the fact that the apologist may have quoted a saying of Christ from oral tradition (Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church, Ibid., op. cit., pp. 26,27). Green-Armytage wrote in favour of Justin's use of John: "St. Justin held that it was the second person of the Trinity rather than the first who spoke with the Patriarchs and Moses, an idea more likely to be suggested by St. John than by any other New Testament writer." (John i. 1-4 and vii. 56-58. A. H. N. Green-Armytage, John Who Saw, p. 66.)

believing that Justin used the Fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The one remaining quotation which Abbott considered as external evidence on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. is taken from the Muratorian Fragment. This quotation received Abbott's attention and to some extent his following. According to Abbott this document declares that

. . . being requested by his fellow-disciples and bishops to write, John desired them to fast for three days and then to relate to one another what revelation each had received either for or against the project. The same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that "while all called (the past) to mind (or while all revised - 'conatis recognoscentibus') John should write everything in his own name".<sup>2</sup>

John xxi.24 ("we" testify to the truthfulness of "the disciples" who had written "these things") seems to Abbott to indicate joint authorship and revision, "or at all events a desire to convey the impression of joint authorship or revision such as the Muratorian Fragment describes."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, while Abbott held that the question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel was unanswerable, he did have some definite ideas

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<sup>1</sup>As for Justin's variations from John where he appears to be referring to him, in addition to such things as a purpose different from John's which may have caused him to vary his wording, we ought also to keep in mind that "it is not very unusual in patristic citations to find the author's comments interlarded with the scriptural words." (Drummond, 'Justin Martyr and the Fourth Gospel', op. cit., p. 485.)

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit., p. 819.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

on the subject He believed it was not unlikely that this Gospel represents "the teaching of Andrew, Philip, Aristion, and John the elder, as well as that of John" (the Apostle).<sup>1</sup> The discourses of Jesus found in the Fourth Gospel may have originated in explanations by John the son of Zebedee of what Jesus meant, originally intended as marginal comment on the text of Jesus' sayings. These may have been subsequently

. . . modified and amplified by the evangelist and elders of the Ephesian Church, and being thrown into the form of a consecutive, harmonious, and artistic whole by one particular Evangelist (perhaps John the Elder), the whole mass of explanation or comment came to be regarded not merely as <sup>2</sup> what Christ meant but as what He actually said.

The proposed Evangelist received the Gospel Tradition from the Apostle John and the Elders of Ephesus; and with the freedom of a true prophet he

would develop, explain, and amplify the nucleus of truth bequeathed to his predecessors the Elders of Ephesus, by their first Bishop. 'Spiritually speaking' our Evangelist would reason, 'John the Disciple of the Lord wrote, the Elders attested, I myself was but the pen'.<sup>3</sup>

From the external evidence Abbott apparently concluded that the Evangelist of the Fourth Gospel was (perhaps) John the Elder. However, in his argument for this conclusion he laid aside some evidence for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 841. The Muratorian Canon states that the Fourth Gospel has the authority "not of one apostle only but of all the apostles. . . ." (Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 97.)

<sup>2</sup>FLTS, op. cit., pp. 4,5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

authorship by the Apostle John, but accepted other evidence for St. John's authorship of the Revelation.<sup>1</sup> Today it is widely held that John the Elder was the author of this Gospel.<sup>2</sup> But this belief may be accompanied with a strong belief in John's historicity to an extent not found in Abbott. In his time the alternatives were, more than they are today, - either (1) John, the son of Zebedée wrote the Gospel and it is historical or (2) someone else wrote the Gospel and it is not historical. Abbott, in his theory that John the Elder was the Evangelist, does not discount all apostolic influence behind the Gospel, but he does not reason as one scholar has put it that "... the Gospel is the Gospel of John the Elder according to John the Apostle."<sup>3</sup> Rather Abbott takes the Gospel to be by John the Elder and according to many, one of whom is John the apostle. The maintainance of the authenticity of John, although it may be by John the Elder but according to the Apostle, has come about in part through the realisation that Jesus' sayings in John have a definite Aramaic colouring which indicate that a logical source of Jesus' sayings has been used by John.<sup>4</sup> Also "Archeological discovery has, at point after

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<sup>1</sup>We must keep in mind a fact which we do not find in Abbott that there is a consistent tradition from the latter half of the second century declaring John, the son of Zebedee, the author of this Gospel. (W.F. Howard, "Introduction to the Gospel of John," The Interpreters' Bible, Vol VIII, p. 441.)

<sup>2</sup>V. Taylor, 'The Fourth Gospel and Some Recent Criticism', op. cit., p. 730; C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p.106.

<sup>3</sup>A.M. Hunter, 'Recent Trends in Johannine Studies,' "The Expository Times," Vol. LXXI, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 165.



point, confirmed St. John's topographical accuracy."<sup>1</sup> The realisation that this Gospel contains good historical material has accompanied the belief, in many instances, that John the Apostle is not the author but that his authority may lie behind it.<sup>1</sup> This recognizes that the Apostle John's authority is behind the Fourth Gospel to an extent that Abbott never allowed.

In regard to the date of the Fourth Gospel, Abbott believed that in 105 A.D. the Johannine Gospel was preached orally at Ephesus, but it had not been published.<sup>2</sup> During the period that Papias wrote, "John was attaining, but had not yet attained, recognition as an apostolic Gospel."<sup>3</sup> Apparently Abbott would place the publication date of the Johannine Gospel after 105 A.D. He does not make it clear just when the Gospel was published. He declares that it was not until the time of Irenaeus that this Gospel met with almost universal acceptance.<sup>4</sup> Due to the evidence of the papyri which came to light in 1935 the publication of this Gospel is probably about 120 A.D., or even earlier. "The growing opinion that St. John did not know the Synoptic Gospels means that we need not date the Fourth Gospel, say 10 or 15 years after them. It might have been written about 80 A.D.; but then again it might have been written a decade earlier."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The early martyrdom of John which many accept today (Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation, op. cit., p. 232) is not used by Abbott as an argument against the apostolic authorship of John. He makes Clemens, a character in Silanus the Christian, say that although John "became a martyr, or witness, for the Saviour, he survived his martyrdom and lived to a great old age." Abbott, Silanus the Christian, op. cit., p. 303.)

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1817.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., col. 1818.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., col. 1824.

<sup>5</sup>A.M. Hunter, 'Recent Trends in Johannine Studies,' op. cit., p. 222.



In short then, there is more of a possibility than Abbott allowed that the Gospel of John contains the testimony of the Apostle John; and there is good evidence that it may have been written earlier than Abbott's writings would lead us to believe.

## II. THE BACKGROUND OF JOHN

Abbott did not deny that John has a Jewish background. One of his avowed aims in his Diatessarica was to show that "Jewish poetic literature" would enable scholars to arrive at the historical facts presented by the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> In particular he discovered a close connexion between the thoughts of the Gospel of John and the apparently Jewish Christian and mystical 'Odes of Solomon'. This, however, did not prevent him from also believing that John's Gospel can be understood only in the light of the allegorical interpretations of Philo Judaeus and the Hellenistic philosophy mediated through Philo.<sup>2</sup>

### Philo

The extent to which Abbott discovered Philonic doctrine in John is illustrated in his discussion of John's Prologue. He declares that John contradicts Philo's assertion that the divine life did not ever enter into a bodily prison and that "the Logos itself, the Sphere of Life, 'became flesh.'" He calls John's Prologue an account

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold V, op. cit., p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>The different elements from which Philo's 'Logos' was composed according to one scholar are: "Platonic dualism, Stoic monism, Jewish Monotheism, modified by the later belief in the hypostases of God of which the most notable was Wisdom." (H. A. A. Kennedy, Philo's Contribution to Religion, p. 162.)

of the second Genesis, drawing attention to its connexion with the account of creation in the first Genesis.<sup>1</sup> He also declares that John's Prologue

. . . is based on ancient traditions describing (Proverbs viii. 1-36, Job xxviii. 12-28) Wisdom as having taken part with God from the beginning in the creation and predicting the accomplishment of God's 'truth and grace' and the 'tabernacling of his glory among men'. (Micah vii.20, Psalm lxxxviii. 9-11).<sup>2</sup>

But on the crucial question of what John means by the term 'Logos,' Abbott assumes that the Greek background is determinative. By the 'word,' John means "the Creative Order or Harmony of the Universe, acting in the divine concord, and in the Spirit of God."<sup>3</sup> This concordant Word was always infinite "being itself God."<sup>4</sup> In the second chapter of this thesis we pointed out that Abbott gave words such peculiar meaning until he even had a type of pantheism in mind when he called God Love. For him Love in the material world is the Power of attraction; and he conceived of God as "a Bond or Law, linking and attracting together all things material and spiritual so as to make up the Kosmos or order of the Universe."<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to have this statement from The Kernel and the Husk before us in order to understand the peculiar meaning Abbott gives to his words in his discussion of John's doctrine. For, according to Abbott, John "regards God as a

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., pp. 14, 16.

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1799.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>K & H, op. cit., p. 262.

Spirit, permeating, attracting, and harmonizing all that is, and especially all that is in the sphere of righteousness." He adds "to call such a being 'wisdom' would be bathos. In the Epistle [John] prefers 'Love'."<sup>1</sup> Abbott interprets John as having a pantheistic doctrine of God which is practically identical with his own doctrine found in The Kernel and the Husk, and which is reminiscent of the Stoicism mediated through the writings of Philo. For Philo "recognises a physical sense of  $\piνε\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ , equivalent to air, which recalls the stoic descriptions of God as the 'aery essence'. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

God, the Creative Order or Harmony of the universe, became incarnate - this is John's message according to Abbott. Yet, this logos - the impersonal world order common to divine, animate and inanimate life - is the logos of Philo and Hellenistic thought. Everything, Abbott declared, whether inanimate or animate, has a Law or Logos of its being.<sup>3</sup> Men are creatures who are endowed with Logos and who are akin to the Word. The Logos is in men and they are in the Logos and the Logos is men's light.<sup>4</sup> This sounds very much like the stoic doctrine that man's true happiness consists in following the guidance of the logos, the universal reason which men alone of all 'life' can comprehend and obey although all things contain it.<sup>5</sup>

Abbott's pantheism dictates the nuance which 'Logos' carries. There is a close similarity between Abbott's doctrine of God and that given by

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1799, f.m. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Kennedy, Philo's Contribution to Religion, op. cit., p. 188.

<sup>3</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 15. For the Stoics the Logos is nomos or law which resides in man, a Logos-being, and which points him in the direction he must go. (R. Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, p. 136.)

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Wearing, The World View of the Fourth Gospel, p. 9.

Stoicism. With his pantheistic presuppositions, he made the idea of a creative world order and harmony the determining thought contained in John's 'Logos'.

By taking the Logos to mean a spirit which permeates, harmonizes, and brings order to all that is, he is in close agreement with Heraclitus for whom Logos was "the comprehensive principle of order in the unified world-process",<sup>1</sup> and with Philo who declared that the Logos is "the indissolvable bond of the universe".<sup>2</sup> Abbott obscures the personality of the Logos of John. Logos, "which in Philo is never personal, except in a fluctuating series of metaphors, is in the Gospel fully personal, standing in personal relations both with God and with men, and having a place in history."<sup>3</sup>

The differences between Philo's and John's Logos should be pointed out.

The pre-existence of the Logos is not explicit in Philo, but is emphatically declared in the Prologue of John. The Johannine doctrine of the connexion between Life and Light, which appears in the Logos teaching of the Prologue does not appear in Philo, although he suggests a line of speculation which would, one supposes, have been congenial to him.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kennedy, Philo's Contribution to Religion, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>2</sup>From Philo's writings quoted by Wolfson. H. A. Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I, p. 339.

<sup>3</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 73. On those occasions when Philo ascribes personality to the Logos, he is always thinking of the Divine reason personified as the intermediate agent between God and the world. (G.H.C. MacGregor, The Gospel of John, p. xxxvii.)

<sup>4</sup>J.H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, Vol. I, p. cxli.

Also, John was not limited to Philo as a background for his Logos terminology. The doctrine of a divine Logos was

widely distributed in the first century. The Hebrew Targums or paraphrases of the ancient Scriptures; the Wisdom literature of Judaism both in Palestine and Alexandria; the speculation of Philo; the philosophy of Heraclitus, and that of the later Stoics, all use Logos to explain the mysterious relation of God to man. We may be sure that the Logos of God was as familiar a topic in the educated circles of Asia Minor as the doctrine of Evolution is in Europe or America at the present day, and was discussed not only by the learned but by the half-instructed votaries of many religions.<sup>1</sup>

The Fourth Evangelist deliberately adopts the symbols of this thought, but he "brings them out of the haze of Hellenistic Jewish theologizing into the concrete reality of the historical Christian tradition of the person of Jesus, as living in the daily experiences of the Church around him."<sup>2</sup> In the Prologue the evangelist seems to be moving in the region of Jewish thought all the time. As has been pointed out,

. . . in the opening verses (1-3) he is using language about the pre-existent Logos, which is closely paralleled by that used in rabbinical writing about the Law. The Torah is said to have been 'with God', like Wisdom in Prov. viii, and to have existed in the beginning. The Torah is even said to be of Divine Nature. It is called 'the daughter of God.' An additional confirmation of the position that Jewish thought is the formative element in the Johannine Logos conception is the appearance in verses 4f. of the ideas of 'life' and 'light' which were ascribed to the Torah frequently in rabbinical thought (cf. Ps. cxix.105; Prov. iii.22, iv.13, vi.23). The claims made for the written Torah, John now assigns to Christ, the eternal word, and the personal fulfilment of God's eternal mind and purpose.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>3</sup>R.H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel, p. 96.

The 'Jewishness' of John's 'Logos' is undeniable, and it must be brought into account if we would understand John. It has been summarily stated that in John's Prologue

the Logos or Word of the Lord which originally wrought in the creation of all things (Gen. 1), which shone unconquerably amid man's spiritual darkness in bygone days, which in the prophets struggled for expression - 'coming home' to God's people, albeit his 'own folk' received him not - this Word has now at last been embodied in human flesh, and the Old Testament is fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

The recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls show that "John has its strongest affinities, not with the Greek world, or Philonic Judaism, but with Palestinian Judaism."<sup>2</sup> This is true of such Johannine concepts as truth, knowledge, spirit, and the Word. For, although no equivalent of Logos can be documented in the scrolls, there are "intimate parallels to the Prologue of John in style, content, and vocabulary" in this Essene literature.<sup>3</sup>

This Jewish background to Johannine thought makes it clear that Abbott has given much too Hellenistic a meaning to the Johannine Logos. As we have already pointed out, Abbott recognised that there is a parallel between John's Prologue and the Genesis' account of creation. However, in the elaboration of his thought, he gave the most weight to those ideas which accorded with his world view, which, in effect, asserted that God is the World Order and which, therefore, declared that miracles are inconceivable since God assuredly would not work against

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<sup>1</sup>Hunter, The Unity of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Frank M. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 161. f.n.34.



Himself (or Order would not break its own order). Admittedly, Philo is significant in the study of John's Gospel. His writings introduce us to a world of thought which was the common property of Judaism in so far as it was in contact with the Hellenistic world and in which "the facts of daily life, or the history of the Old Testament, were being interpreted as symbols of the truths at which pagan theology was guessing. . . ."<sup>1</sup> However, Abbott's assumption, that John's Logos is virtually identical with Philo's is not warranted.

Yet, Abbott did not limit Philo's influence on John to the Prologue. At many other places he felt that John's Gospel cannot be understood except by recognising its close ties with Philo. Many of John's names which are "obscured and contested" may have come from Philo. "The mention of the cornfields of Sychar, or Shechem, far from implying an eye-witness, might have been made by any reader of Philo (471) familiar with Genesis 49:15."<sup>2</sup> However, there are good reasons for accepting John's topography as that of a reliable tradition of Jesus' life. A fictitious topography would hardly have commended the Gospel to its recipients, especially if they were Ephesians.<sup>3</sup> Also modern archeological discovery has, "at point after point, confirmed St. John's topographical accuracy."<sup>4</sup> The place names peculiar to John: "Wychar, the City of Ephraim, Bethany beyond Jordan, Aenon near Salim, Canna, Tiberias, Kidron, Bethesda, and Gabbatha almost all are identifiable with

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<sup>1</sup>E.C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. F.N. Davey, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, op. cit., col. 1796.

<sup>3</sup>Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, op. cit., p. 452f.

<sup>4</sup>Hunter, 'Recent Trends in Johannine Studies', op. cit., p. 165f. See also W.F. Albright, 'Recent Discoveries in Palestine and Gospel of John,' "Expository Times," LXXI; and Joachim Jeremias, 'The Copper Scroll from Qumran,' "Expository Times," 71.8, May, 1960, pp. 227f.



certainty."<sup>1</sup>

Abbott assumed that the "Johannine writer" was probably an Alexandrian who was "not exempt from some of the defects of the Philonian system of allegory. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Specifically, he asserted that the number five in the five husbands of the woman at the well means material enjoyment as it does in Philo. This imagery was ". . . appropriately transferred from the pages of Philo to the pages of the Fourth Gospel. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Other Johannine numbers, likewise, are allegorical:

The 153 fish, according to Philonian principles would mean (as explained by Augustine) the Church as evolved from the Law and the Spirit. The 6 water-pots 'containing 2 or 3 firkins apiece' (after the Jew's manner of purifying) represent the inferior dispensation of the week-days - i.e., of the Sabbath - i.e., the Gospel - of which the wedding feast at Cana is a type. Peter swims over 200 cubits, a number that represents (Philo on Genesis 5:22) repentance. The 'five porches' in Bethesda represent the five senses of unredeemed humanity - i.e., the unregenerate passions. . . .<sup>4</sup>

The number 300 in 'three hundred pence' (John xii.5) is taken to mean, as it does in Philo, the harmony between God and man or to refer to the perfect sacrifice of Christ and the resulting unity of the church in his body.<sup>5</sup> In opposition to this view we should keep in mind that the earlier allegorists such as Origen and Philo never "invented an incident or constructed a number in order to teach a spiritual lesson."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A.J.B. Higgins, 'Recent Trends in the Study of the Fourth Gospel,' "Religion in Education," Vol. XXVIII.3, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit., p. 831.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, op. cit., cols. 1796, 1797.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., col. 1797.

<sup>6</sup>Bernard, op. cit., p. LXXXV.

However, the presence of a number in John which Abbott could allegorize through Philo opened the way for him to treat in this manner not only numbers but also the passages where these numbers occurred. Taking 200 to mean repentance in John as it does in Philo, Abbott asserts that Peter is repenting when he swims over 200 cubits to Jesus (John xxi.7-9). The assumption is that John here, as well as elsewhere, may have ". . . recorded under picturesque symbols, a history of spiritual fact."<sup>1</sup>

Because the Fourth Gospel gives us such spiritual truth, it can often be relied upon more than can the Synoptic Gospels. For example, on the subject of Jesus' call to His disciples Abbott asserted

whereas the Three Synoptists are incomplete or misleading, the Fourth Gospel, though perhaps mixing vision with fact, or substituting metaphor for fact, appears at all events to set before us the spiritual reality - what may be described as the real calling - in closer accordance with history and in its correct chronological position. . .<sup>2</sup>

The assumption is that Matthew in his account of Peter walking to Jesus over the water (Matthew xiv: 28-31) and Luke in his account of the calling of the disciples (Luke v. 1-11) have made prose of incidents in the Gospels which were originally related poetically. Only John contains the version which is closest to the truth that lies behind these different versions. We have already seen that Abbott questioned the Synoptist's chronology at many places, so it was no

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold III, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 100. See also pp. 43,44.

problem for him to harmonize them with John.<sup>1</sup> He also allegorized them, even in those details not found in John. Following Ephrem Syrus he suggests Luke's "two vessels" may mean the vessel of the circumcision and the vessel of the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

Philo helped Abbott to arrive at John's "spiritual" meaning. Once he arrives at the conclusion that John is the most spiritual and most factual of the Gospels, he attempts to show that passages in the Synoptic Gospels should also be interpreted "spiritually." Philo's interpretation of the Old Testament furnished him examples and clues which he used to decipher the meaning behind what he took to be John's allegory. Abbott also followed allegorists other than Philo. We have already noticed one such in Ephrem Syrus. Another, to whom he often refers, is Origen. This Alexandrian Father comments that the portion of broiled fish which the disciples gave to Jesus (Luke xxiv.42) represents "the very inadequate return which was all that they could make at present for the word that had been imparted to them."<sup>3</sup> Taking this as a key insight into the gospels, Abbott infers that an allegorical meaning should be found in the similar account of Jesus and the disciples and fish found in John xxi. Another member of the allegorical school of interpreters, Clement of Alexandria, often furnished Abbott with

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<sup>1</sup>One of the main points on which Abbott bases his belief that John and Luke are parallel here is in the confusion in Luke over the word *vevceis*. He noted that this word ". . . might also, in theory, mean 'making signs.'" (Ibid. p. 92.) Luke took it to mean "make-signs" whereas John rightly translated it swimming. All this is very conjectural, but it is typical of the way in which Abbott harmonized John and the Synoptic Gospels.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 83, 84.

interpretations that enabled him to decipher the meaning of what he believed was Johannine "spiritual" language.

Clement implied, according to Abbott, that the flesh of Christ, which He gave as bread for the life of the world, had to be prepared by "fire" before it became the food of the world. Clement "playing on the double meaning of the Greek, puros, i.e., 'fire' and 'wheat' . . . introduces the thought of the wheat rising up in a kind of resurrection, and likens it at the same time to 'bread that is being baked.'" This interpretation, Abbott believed, was significant ". . . if it leads us to think, how very much is implied by the author of the Fourth Gospel, for himself and for those who are in sympathy with him, by the vision of 'the fire of coals' and that which was 'laid thereon.'"<sup>1</sup> Thus, allegorical interpretation, in Abbott's hands, became a means whereby he interpreted this account of what he took to be a vision in John.

The extent to which Abbott found allegorical meaning in the Fourth Gospel reminded one scholar of the similar views of von Hugel.<sup>2</sup> Another with a somewhat similar outlook was W. R. Inge who spoke of the Fourth Gospel's "underlying framework of symbolism and allegory which, though never obtruded, determines the whole arrangement and selection of incidents. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Abbott opined that the Evangelist may

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., p. 369f.

<sup>2</sup>Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism, and Interpretation, op. cit., p. 35. The reference is to von Hugel's article on the Fourth Gospel in the 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>3</sup>W.R. Inge, "John's Gospel of," Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Vol. I, ed. J. Hastings, p. 886.

have selected out of a "vast store of details of name and number. . . those [things] which lent themselves to a symbolical meaning."<sup>1</sup>

In the latter years of the nineteenth century and of the early twentieth century many scholars held that the Fourth Gospel was to be understood mainly from a Hellenistic standpoint.<sup>2</sup> Since then John's Semitic element has been recognised and studied. At the same time there has been a fresh study of Judaism in connexion with the problem of the New Testament. In this area New Testament scholarship has made great progress since Abbott's time. Prior to "the early years of the present century scholars found it almost impossible to make effective use of the documents of Rabbinic Judaism for want of a critical and chronological assessment of the material."<sup>3</sup>

In the light of the greater knowledge of writings which contain vocabulary parallels to the Fourth Gospel there can no longer be a facile acceptance of Philo and other allegorists as the ones who make John's meaning clear. Today it is recognized that "the key words of the gospel can be traced in the Old Testament and in the documents of later Judaism."<sup>4</sup> Also, the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for John's background of thought has been summarized by one scholar:

. . . for the first time they present us with a body of thought which in date and place (southern Palestine in the first century B.C.-A.D.) as well as in fundamentals, and not merely verbal, theological

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* op. cit. col. 1796.

<sup>2</sup>Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, op. cit., p. 107.

affinity, may really represent an actual background, and not merely a possible environment, for the distinctive categories of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott's works show that he makes use of the Rabbinic writings to some extent. His references to them, however, are infrequent, and it is apparent that Philo and others with similar views dictate John's meaning to him.

He consistently failed to recognise, or to account for, John's historicity which warns against the assumption that it is allegory. If he had recognised this, it might have prevented him from making John a 'spiritual' allegory. The movement of thought on this point has gone against Abbott's position. The tendency of recent scholarship has been to find "much more history and much less allegory" in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole Abbott's works leave virtually no room for any history in John. From John we can learn of the Jesus of faith but little of the 'Jesus of history.' John's records are of visions, John's setting, his 'props,' his scenery, his events are allegorical. This is not true only regarding the examples we have given but of many others which space will not allow us to give. Invariably, his evidence for this position is given in his characteristic rambling and verbose style. He leads us gradually up to his conclusion. At the outset he makes a concession which is against his conclusion; and he attempts, as he did in his 'Logos' doctrine, to carry contradictory views along with

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<sup>1</sup>J.A. T. Robinson, Twelve New Testament Studies, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament 1900-1950, p. 89.

him, at least for a little way, but in the end John is interpreted as a history of spiritual and allegorical fact.

In his later works, such as the Diatessarica, Abbott's theories regarding the formative period of the Gospels seem to have been more 'submerged' than they were in such works as Onesimus, but they still are a part of his thinking. He never gave up belief in his world view, nor did he repudiate his ideas about how our Gospels came into being. In one of his later books he declared that our Fourth Evangelist was conscious that the Spirit, which had come from Christ, enabled

him to represent our Lord, not as He appeared in the flesh to the multitudes, or even to the disciples in Galilee, but as He appeared to those who loved him when they, after His death. . . summed up the character and person of their Saviour in one consistent image, and realized Him as the Holy One of God, their only Light and Life.<sup>1</sup>

The sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel were not all spoken by Christ some of them came from the Spirit. It is in the light of such statements as these that we should seek to understand the following declaration made by Abbott on John's history:

. . . twenty-five years of study, while deepening my previous negative convictions as to the evidential qualifications of the Fourth Evangelist, also convinced me that I had occasionally underestimated his anxiety to be historical as well as spiritually truthful. Where I had once supposed him to be inventing or (if I may coin a useful barbarism) poeticizing, he now appeared to be extracting the spiritual truth out of some ancient tradition obscured by Mark and omitted or variously interpreted by the later Evangelists.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



John's spiritual truth is historically valid. This prepares us to understand what Abbott means by fact when he declares that, in order to secure the history of the Fourth Gospel, it "must be dispassionately analysed so as to separate fact from non-fact," and adds "no criticism, however, ought to prevent us from recognising its historical value in correcting impressions derived from the Synoptic Gospels."<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, according to Abbott, John means that Peter is repenting when he swims 200 cubits to Jesus. This incident is, "fact mingled with vision and related with a view to symbolism, but still, like Christ's appearance to Paul in the Acts, substantially fact."<sup>2</sup> Here, as well as elsewhere, John may be "drawing out the meaning by early Christian poetic tradition, that recorded under picturesque symbols, a history of spiritual fact."<sup>3</sup> Here the terms history and fact have been given a peculiar meaning. Yet, even when he declares that John has 'history' and 'fact,' his scepticism regarding the Gospels - as far as any other kind of history is concerned - is manifest for he is speaking of facts of visions and spiritual facts. He does not believe the facts which the modern man of his day sought would ever be available. But he found in John a Gospel which "often raises us above details of which the certitude will probably never be ascertained into a region where we apprehend the nature and existence of a Word of Life, essentially the same in heaven and on earth. . . ."<sup>4</sup> He believed we must be content with these Johannine facts. However, we

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1809, 1810.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold III, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, Encyclopaedia Biblica, op. cit., col. 1810.

have shown that we are not limited to Philo, or the other allegorists, in our search for a background to John's thought. Therefore, one of the main sources of light on this Gospel used by Abbott to deny its historicity and to interpret it allegorically does not deserve the place of central significance he gave it. John, in contrast to Philo, does not "torture details into allegorical meanings." This Evangelist is "never fantastic. He thinks of (the) happenings in the life of Jesus in the flesh and His sayings as actually significant in themselves." Here,

individual human actions and utterances, men's behaviour and response to the personality and appeal of the Logos Christ, their belief and unbelief, acceptance and rejection, all contribute in the province of God towards the final revelation in human form of the ever-active Word. This is a symbolic view of history, no allegory. The actual history is conceived as a comprehensive sign of what is supra-historical - the eternal world of 'Truth' realizing itself in the world of men and things.<sup>1</sup>

John is not an allegory to which Philo furnishes the key. John's ideas can be understood only in the light of a much wider background than the allegorists furnish. Philo's place in the interpretation of John can be seen only when others background material is given due significance. The part of this broader background that particularly received Abbott's attention was the Odes of Solomon which we will consider next.

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<sup>1</sup>Strachan, The Fourth Gospel, op. cit., pp.35,36.

### The Odes of Solomon

A copy of the Odes of Solomon was discovered in a Syriac version by Rendel Harris on January 4, 1909. A few of the Odes were already known through the writings of Lactantius and the Pistis Sophia; but the collection of them which Harris found appeared to be complete, bound in a book that ". . . had been reposing along with a number of other Syriac fragments on his bookshelves, apparently for a couple of years or more. . ."<sup>1</sup> before their importance was realized. There was considerable excitement among scholars over this discovery. Adolph Harnack looked upon it as epoch-making for the historical elucidation of the Gospel of John.<sup>2</sup>

At first Abbott put aside all other work and studied the Odes for ten days; but he found, at the end of this period, that he must give more time to them. In part he was seeking to establish that the Syriac Odes were a translation from a Hebrew original.

Earlier we saw that Abbott traced the Synoptic Gospels back to an original Hebrew Gospel. He also theorized that the Syriac Odes were derived from a Hebrew original. As in the previous case, so here too, Abbott imagined that an author chose to write in Biblical Hebrew in the first century A.D. He declared that "it appears to me probable that the Odes were originally composed in Hebrew of which there may have been versions in several languages."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. X, p.497.

<sup>2</sup>Adolph Harnack, Ein Jüdisch-Christliches Psalmbuch aus dem ersten Jahrhundert, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Light on the Gospel, p. xxiv, f.n.1.

As evidence that Hebrew was the original language of the Odes, he pointed out that the

. . . only marginal variation in the Odes (1) 'attacked,' (2) 'cast lots' (Codex N 'Cast lots') may be illustrated by a precisely similar variation in renderings of the Hebrew of Job, where the Hebrew has 'cast lots' but the Greek and Latin have 'fell on' or 'attacked'. . . .<sup>1</sup>

He assumed that the Odes of Solomon may have been written to supplement the Psalms of Solomon and that since the latter are known to have been written in Hebrew, the former may have been also.<sup>2</sup> However, it should be pointed out that, even on the basis of Abbott's own estimate, more than 150 years separate these two works.<sup>3</sup> During this time the Psalms could have conceivably been translated into a language other than Hebrew and they may have been observed by the Odist, if at all, (a point not proven), in a language other than Hebrew. Besides, Abbott does not give any other example of a work which is a supplement rather than an interpolation, as he suggests the Odes may be. From the available evidence it has been concluded that

we may make a reserve, if we please, for the possible bilingualism of the author, he may have known the Septaugint; he must have known the Hebrew, the Peshitta, and the Targum. . . over and over again we have to refer an expression in the Odes to the Targum or the closely related

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xxiv., f.n.1

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Psalms of Solomon is dated approximately 63 B.C. (James Hastings ed., A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV, p. 162.); and Abbott dates the Odes ". . . at the end of the first century, soon after the ascension of nerva." (Abbott, Light on the Gospel, op. cit., p. 463.)

Peshitta, if we are to understand it rightly.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of this relationship between the Odes and the Targum, the Syriac Odes probably are derived from an Aramaic original and their Jewish background is to be found particularly in the Targum.

In addition to his hypothesis that the Odes were originally written in Hebrew, Abbott found a close connexion between them and the Jewish Haggada. For him the Odist seems "to be borrowing from Scripture, and from that kind of Jewish poetic or legendary tradition about Scripture which is called the Haggada. . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, he does not give extensive or convincing proof that the Odist borrowed from the poetic and legendary part of the Haggada. In his own index to Light on the Gospel he lists only four references to the Haggada. In two of these (pp. xxii and xxxii) he states that the Odes borrow from, and are closely related to, the Haggada without giving specific evidence that this is true. At another place, by a number of steps, he connects the word for 'sign' (resham), Ode xlii.25, with the noun formed from the Hebrew rasham as it was used "technically".<sup>3</sup> He thus connects the Odes with

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<sup>1</sup>Rendel Harris and Alphonse Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, Vol. I, pp. 170, 171. Harnack concluded that the Syriac Odes may go back through a Greek translation to a Hebrew or Aramaic original. (Harnack, *Ein Jüdisch-Christliches Psalmbuch aus dem ersten Jahrhundert*, op. cit., p. 105). Harris and Migana also point out a difference between the Syriac versions of the Psalms of Solomon and the Odes of Solomon: "The Psalms of Solomon, as they come to us in Syriac, are a very harsh and unpleasing product, the result of a couple of ungainly translations, quite different from the most part, musical and correct Syriac of the Odes. . . ." (Harris and Mingana, op. cit., p. vii.)

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Light on the Gospel, op. cit., p. xxii.

<sup>3</sup>I have italicized "technically."

the mysticism which was prevalent among the Jews in the first century. By the end of the second century the rabbis gave no account of the reshumouth, which belonged to a certain class of expositor, and let them fall into oblivion. He added, "the hypothesis of a conflict between two classes of Rabinnical interpretation is illustrated by the rebuke addressed to R. Akiba 'Akiba, what hast thou to do with Haggada?'"<sup>1</sup> This is so vague and conjectural that it does not establish a connexion between the Haggada, the reshumouth, and the Odes. Even if the Odist's statement (Ode xlii.25) that the Lord's 'name' is signed or put "upon the heads of those rescued from Sheol" implies that the Odist is a mystic, it does not follow from this that the Odes, the reshumouth, and the Haggada should all be placed in the same class because the Odes contain the word resham.

The only other reference to the Haggada in his index is to the Haggadic tradition that the Lord set Himself against the House of the Lord which Solomon had built the day that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh. Abbott infers that it was partly on the basis of this tradition that the Odist passes quickly from Solomon as Israel's representative to other representatives such as Abraham.<sup>2</sup> The Bible gives ample testimony of Solomon's corruption, and the theory that the Odist, due to the influence of the Haggada, chose other representatives of Israel in his work after beginning with Solomon is unnecessary.

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Light on the Gospel, op. cit., p. 264, f.n. 3814dl.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 498.

Therefore, it does not appear that Abbott proved that the Odes borrowed<sup>1</sup> from the Haggada. Yet, he was to make much of the supposed close parallel, not only between the Odes and the Haggada, but also between the Fourth Gospel, which he connects closely with the Odes, and the 'poetic' Haggada. In his last volume of *Diatessarica* he stressed this connexion when he stated that the Fourth Gospel, "though largely indebted to Philo, is also much more than is generally supposed akin to Jewish poetic or Haggadic thought, such as is found in the Midrash or ancient Jewish commentaries on Scripture."<sup>2</sup> For Abbott, then, to say that the Fourth Gospel was Jewish was the same as saying that it was Haggadic and poetic. In the examples we have given, however, he does not give convincing proof that the Odists borrowed from Jewish Haggadic thought; and, in view of the connexion between the Odes and the Targum, it appears that the Odes' Jewish background is to be especially found in the Targum.

Even if it were shown that the Odists drew largely from Haggadic thought, it would not necessarily follow that the Fourth Evangelist did also, either by way of the Odes or the Haggada. When this point arises, such questions as the date of the Odes and the Gospel and whether either work borrows from the other are all important. We shall return to these questions in due time, but the point we make here is that for Abbott it was important to demonstrate the Haggadic character of the Odes as an example of the Haggadic writing which made up the Jewish poetic background of the Fourth Gospel. However, he did not establish a close connexion between the Odes and the Haggada.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xxii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xvi.



Besides tracing out a connexion between the Odes and the Haggada, Abbott also found similarities between the Odes and Philo. He believed that the Odist was "probably acquainted with Alexandrian allegory, and, in particular, with that of Philo."<sup>1</sup> One of the purposes of his study of the Odes was to collect ". . . what Philo said about the subjects of which the Odes directly treat or to which they apparently allude."<sup>2</sup> Although there are similarities between Philo and the Odes,<sup>3</sup> Abbott declares that we need not suppose that the author of the Odes borrowed from Philo.<sup>4</sup> Philo is not as poetic as the Odes<sup>5</sup> neither is he as mystical for the Odes have advanced into mystical Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Here, let it be noted, he does not deny Philo's mysticism,<sup>7</sup> but states that the Odes have advanced into Christian mysticism. We have already seen in the section on Johannine authorship and date that, for Abbott, the Fourth Gospel is a developed tradition handed down by the Ephesian Church. He looked upon the Odes, which had advanced into mystical Christianity, as a connecting link within this tradition between Philo and the Fourth Gospel. For him, the author of the Odes was

. . . a Jewish Christian, writing in the first century, under the influence of Palestinian poetry, Alexandrian allegory, Egyptian mysticism, and - most powerful of all - the influence of the Spirit of Love and Sonship, freshly working the Christian Church. . . .<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pl. xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. xxiv, 97, 233.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 233, 111, f.n.2

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. xxxiv.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>7</sup>Philo's mysticism is well known. There is a discussion of it in Kennedy's *Philo's Contribution to Religion*, op. cit., pp. 211, 221.

<sup>8</sup>Abbott, *Light on the Gospel*, op. cit., p. xxix.

Very similarly, our Fourth Evangelist, according to Abbott, was enabled by the Spirit which had come from Christ to represent our Lord as He appeared, after His death, to those who loved Him.<sup>1</sup> Besides this similarity of the manner in which they originated, the Odes also contain doctrines somewhat parallel to those of the Fourth Gospel on the following subjects: love<sup>2</sup>, teaching,<sup>3</sup> bearing fruits,<sup>4</sup> and 'mystery.'<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, the Odes contain several characteristically Johannine doctrines.

Harnack stated that the Christology of the Odes was closely akin to the Johannine Christology.<sup>6</sup> Also, Harris found in the Odes the Johannine doctrine that because the beloved lives the Odist lives also and that the Odist should not have known how to love the Lord if the Lord had not loved him which is reminiscent of John's doctrine, 'we love Him because He first loved us.'<sup>7</sup>

By connecting the Odes with Philo and then finding in the Odes several Johannine doctrines, Abbott believed he had found an important link not only between the Jewish Haggada and the Fourth Gospel but also between Philo and the Fourth Gospel. That link was the Odes of Solomon.

In view of the doctrines which the Odes and the Fourth Gospel have

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Light on the Gospel, op. cit., p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Light on the Gospel, op. cit., pp. 40, 43.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 57, f.n. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>6</sup>Harnack, Ein Judisch-Christliches Psalmbuch aus dem ersten Jahrhundert, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>7</sup>R. Harris, An Early Christian Psalter, p. 3.

in common, the date assigned the Odes is very significant. It has been pointed out that,

. . . were the Odes as early as the first century, we would have to treat them not only as arising in an environment like that which was the birth place of the Fourth Gospel, but as being actually one of the sources from which its distinctive doctrines were derived.<sup>1</sup>

In assigning a date to the Odes, "it may be taken as proved," that they were used in their Syriac form by Ephrem in the Fourth century,<sup>2</sup> and five of the Odes were quoted in the Pistis Sophia in the third century.<sup>3</sup> Today, the Odes are given a date "considerably later than the (Fourth) Gospel,"<sup>4</sup> about "160 or 170 A.D."<sup>5</sup> This date makes it probable that where the Gospel of John and the Odes are parallel the Odes are later; they borrowed the characteristic Johannine thought instead of contributing to it as Abbott proposed.

The discovery of mystical Odes<sup>6</sup> which contain parallels to the Fourth Gospel does not prove the latter is nothing more than a record of mystical experience. Such passages as John xiv.23, xiv.17 suggest a kind of Johannine mysticism; but it is controlled by notions of faith and knowledge.<sup>7</sup> The connexion between John and the Odes does not make the Gospel of John a mystical writing. John's historicity goes against this assumption; and the Ode's date indicates that John

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard, op. cit., p. cxlvii.

<sup>2</sup>Harris and Migana, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>4</sup>Howard, The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>5</sup>Bernard, op. cit., p. cxlvi.

<sup>6</sup>On Ode iii R. Harris said, "the author is a mystic." Harris, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 73.

did not borrow ideas from the mystical Odes as Abbott posited. It has been appropriately stated that,

It is possible to make these Odes contribute to the historicity of John's conception of Jesus. This mystical element in the Odes may be pre-Christian, but did it find its conscious fulfillment in the mind of Jesus? The whole impression of the Fourth Gospel. . . is that it is the work of one who would take no unwarrantable liberties with the consciousness of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, the Odes cannot be taken as evidence by which the exclusively spiritual and mystical character of John can be proven, as Abbott attempted to do.

It is obvious that Abbott found in the background of the Fourth Gospel, the evidence that would back up his interpretation of John as a book which was in accord with his philosophy. Through Philo he allegorized the Fourth Gospel and through the Odes of Solomon he made out a case that John was a mystical work of the first century A.D. Thus, he turned John into a Gospel which he could spiritualise. In so doing he made many errors in his estimate of the Gospel's background and of the Gospel itself.

### III. JOHANNINE VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

First we shall examine the materials Abbott used to illustrate John's language in an effort to ascertain what writings he held most significant for an understanding of John. Then we shall look at his

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<sup>1</sup>R.H. Strachan, 'The Newly Discovered Odes, and their Bearing on the Problem of the Fourth Gospel,' "The Expository Times," Vol. XXII, (1910-1911), p. 14.

work of collecting and classifying and see its significance for Abbott's thought as a whole.

In 1869 Abbott wrote A Shakespearean Grammar in which he followed a plan which he declared was very similar to that followed in his Johannine Grammar. In A Shakespearean Grammar "North's Plutarch, Florio's Montaigne, the Elizabethan dramatists and especially Shakespeare's own works compared with one another were treated as safer guides to his meaning than Milton, Dryden, and Pope."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, he declared that in his Johannine Grammar, "the Septuagint, the Synoptists, the New Testament as a whole, Epictetus, and the Papyri of 50-150 A.D. have been recognised as safer guides than the writers of the third century and far safer guides than those of the fourth."<sup>2</sup>

The use he made of the papyri was criticised by a contemporary papyrologist. J.H. Moulton declared,

Dr. Abbott quotes frequently from the non-literary papyri, but I hardly think he had adequately realised the change in our perspective which the systematic study of the vernacular documents has brought us since Deissmann showed us the way. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Abbott lists approximately thirty-five references to the papyri in the index of his Johannine Grammar; none are listed in Johannine Vocabulary. He did not take into account the evidence of the papyri at places where he might have done so. For instance, he believed that behind  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$  in John 1.15 ( $\delta\tau\epsilon\ \pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\omicron\upsilon\ \tilde{\eta}\nu$ ) there may have been the Hebrew

<sup>1</sup> Edwin A. Abbott, Johannine Grammar, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Moulton, 'Review of Johannine Grammar,' "American Journal of Theology," Vol. X, 1907, p. 160f. F. A. Deissmann's Bibel - studien appeared in 1895 and his Neue Bibelstudien in 1897.

Rab, the root of 'Rabbi,' 'Teacher.' According to this hypothesis the Baptist said in effect "Jesus of Nazareth numbers himself among my disciples, but He was from the first my Teacher, or Rab." Rab is used in two senses in Hebrew: as 'first born' in allusion to Jacob the elder serving the younger and as 'mighty' in passages such as Isaiah lxiii.1, liii.12. John may have taken the word in the former sense and the Synoptists in the latter.<sup>1</sup> Moulton found a similar construction (  $\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\lambda\pi\epsilon\lambda$  ) in the Leyden Papyrus.<sup>2</sup> Abbott held that the papyrus was alluding to John 1.15 and did not give an independent parallel construction.<sup>3</sup> Colwell agreed with Moulton against Abbott on the basis that two scholiasts on Euripides gave constructions parallel to John 1.15 and concluded that John's construction in Hellenistic Greek making the hypothesis of Semitic influence in this case unnecessary.<sup>4</sup> Abbott translated  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$  'Elder Brother' in John xv.18.<sup>5</sup> To Moulton this seemed "rather a long way from the technical term  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$  as used in the papyri and in Acts xxviii.7."<sup>6</sup> This shows that Abbott did not always follow the evidence provided by the papyri.

Even in those instances where Abbott used the evidence of the

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. I, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., pp. 510, 511.

<sup>4</sup>E.C. Colwell, The Greek of the Fourth Gospel, pp. 77, 78.

<sup>5</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, op. cit. p. 159.

papyri, he did not always allow it to be determinative for Johannine meaning. For instance, he observed that "oxyr. Pap. 736 perhaps resembles Jn. xxi. 5-9 in using  $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\nu$  and to mean nearly the same thing." However, he adds that "in John the word may have a symbolic meaning."<sup>1</sup> Then, following suggestions from Origen, he contends that  $\theta\psi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  may have an inner meaning, being an allusion to  $\iota\chi\theta\upsilon\varsigma$  which here appears as a eucharistic type of Christ.<sup>2</sup> This shows that in his discussion of Johannine language, he was greatly influenced by his position that such incidents as the catch of the fish in John xxi were symbolical. Here the papyri, though taken into consideration, were not sufficient evidence to persuade Abbott that  $\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\nu$  probably does not contain Origen's "inner meaning."

It was in the LXX more than in the papyri that Abbott found illustrations of John's Greek. The place Abbott gave to LXX Greek led one critic to state,

Students of the New Testament certainly do not always overcome the temptation to regard the sacred writers as virtually saying to themselves, 'Go to, I will write another canonical book: for this end, what words and phrases does the LXX supply.'<sup>3</sup>

Abbott began work on John's vocabulary and grammar seven years before he published works on these subjects in 1905 and 1906. At this time

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 194, f.n. 2235d.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>'Review of Johannine Vocabulary,' "Classical Review," Vol XX, 1906. p.



the significance of the papyri was in the process of being established, and Abbott's perspective appears to have been basically that which held that New Testament Greek was a unique 'Biblical Greek' - a view point that was common before the papyri were evaluated by such men as Deissmann and Moulton. Abbott was familiar with the LXX, as is evidenced by his Corrections of Mark, while the papyri had only recently become significant for New Testament Greek. It appears evident that Abbott did not take account of contemporary scholarship as he should have. His perspective was not really enlarged by the new discoveries in the papyri. His close following of Origen and his familiarity with the LXX worked together to prevent him from giving any significant weight to papyri evidence.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of ἄνωθεν in John iii. 3-7 was determined by its LXX usage as far as Abbott was concerned. Based on the fact that in the LXX this adverb always has a local meaning except on the one occasion in the Wisdom of Solomon where it is joined with παλιν, he held that the Johannine meaning was 'from heaven.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as Colwell points out, there is a passage from Epictetus where ἄνωθεν means 'from above' and, in the same context, 'again.'<sup>3</sup> Abbott makes many references to the writings of Epictetus in his Johannine Grammar, but he takes John to mean what the LXX meant by this word.

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<sup>1</sup>Nor does it appear that Abbott recognised the truth that New Testament Greek has characteristics in common with Modern Greek. A. T. Robertson pointed out that "the new Greek speech was developed, not out of the Byzantine literary language, but out of the Hellenistic popular speech." (A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 20.)

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Colwell, op. cit., p.

Although Abbott's neglect of the papyri was criticised by the papyrologists of his day, his works are devoid of some of the excesses of his critics which are evident from our present understanding of Johannine Greek.

For instance, the use of *καί* by John as a connective instead of participle or subordinate clause is called Hebraic by Abbott.<sup>1</sup> Moulton asserted that this in itself

. . . proves nothing more than would a string of ands in an English rustics story - elementary culture, and not the hampering presence of a foreign idiom that is being perpetually translated into its most literal equivalent.<sup>2</sup>

C. F. Burney, in opposition to this statement, declared,

The vice of arguing from the epistolary style of an Egyptian pig-merchant or the speech of an English rustic to the style of the Fourth Gospel lies in the fact that the former are not in pari materia with the latter. The theory of elementary culture which satisfactorily explains the style of the former is ill applied to a work which in thought, scheme, and execution takes rank as the greatest literary production of the New Testament, and the greatest religious monument of all time.<sup>3</sup>

This construction is recognised as "a prime feature of Hebrew and Aramaic style."<sup>4</sup> Still for Abbott this Johannine construction may have a special meaning behind it. He believed it was

. . . a reasonable probability that John, writing many years after the circulation of the Synoptic tradition which seldom uses the Hebraic in the sense 'and yet,' deliberately resorted to it as one of the many

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>2</sup>Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>C.F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Hunter, 'Recent Trends in Johannine Studies,' op. cit., p. 165.

means of forcing his readers to reflect on the many-sidedness of the Lord's doctrine and on the occasional inadequacy of the letter of the earliest Gospels to reproduce the living word.<sup>1</sup>

Surely the simplest and most probable explanation is that parataxis in John is Hebraic and not an allusion to the letter of the Synoptic Gospels. The place John occupied in his interpretive scheme of the Gospels, whereby he spiritualised the Gospels, prevented him from accepting this Hebraism in John at its face value. Therefore even when Abbott recognised this Hebraic element of John's Greek, his insistence that John is consciously alluding to the Synoptics and spiritualising the message they have materialised prevents him from recognising the weight John's language gives to the probability that this Gospel is a product of Palestinian Judaism. As a result, although he avoids overstressing the significance of the papyri, he does not properly account for the Hebraic element in John's language and the significant point that this makes., i.e., that the allegorists of Hellenistic Judaism should not be taken as the primary interpreters of John.<sup>2</sup> This was also accompanied by another deficiency in his treatment of John, the one to which Moulton, in particular, drew attention: Abbott does not take the papyri as "indispensible to the understanding of much of the vocabulary and grammar of the New Testament. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>We recognise the importance of the LXX for our understanding of John. We do not deny that the making of the Greek Bible had created a Greek vocabulary for a presentation of the gospel in the Hellenistic world. (G.D. Kilpatrick, "The Religious Background of the Fourth Gospel" Studies in the Fourth Gospel, ed. F.L. Gross, p. 44.) But this does not mean John should be interpreted by the allegory of Philo.

<sup>3</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, "The Language of the New Testament," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, eds. G.A. Buttrick et.al., p. 53.

When the papyri appeared, Abbott already had his key to the understanding of John in allegorical, mystical, spiritual interpretation of it. He was not so much concerned with any material unless he could make it contribute to the purpose of interpreting John in this way.

For this same reason we find absent from Abbott's works any recognition of the impact upon language which the experience of God's love, as revealed in Jesus Christ, brought to the people of the New Testament. For instance, ΠΛΟΤΕΥΕΙΝ followed by ΕΨ had been described as a "Christian formation to signify a personal trust which brings the soul into . . . mystical union with Christ. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Abbott searches in vain for this construction in the LXX and in Philo. <sup>2</sup> The possibility that new grammatical expressions grew up among those who worshipped God as He is revealed in Christ does not seem to have occurred to Abbott. <sup>3</sup> This is perhaps the most serious error of all in Abbott's handling of John's language for it points to the failure to account for the unique and glorious act of the Incarnation and the life to which God calls believers in Christ. The believer's life in Christ cannot be explained by making Philo the interpreter of John as Abbott did.

A few examples should be sufficient to indicate the central place Abbott gave the allegorists in his works on John's language and to show that it was not mainly the LXX, the papyri, the Synoptists, or Epictetus

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, op. cit., p. 23f.

<sup>3</sup>However the construction may represent Hebrew or Aramaic constructions. (Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, op. cit., p. 9.) Still it may have been retained in Greek to convey the believer's relationship to Christ.

who furnished Abbott with illustrations of John's wording; but it was the allegorists, Philo in particular. Through Philo he finds a mystical meaning in Jesus' words, "What seek ye?" (John 1.38). The route by which he comes to this conclusion is rather devious;<sup>1</sup> therefore, we shall quote him at length. He declared,

. . . almost the first use of *ζητέω* . . . is the question of the unnamed man (Gen. xxxvii.15 "a certain man") to the wandering Joseph, 'What seeketh thou?' Philo (1.196) regards Joseph as the type of the wandering soul to whom the ideal man - who dwells in our hearts - speaks as a convictor . . . asking us what we regard as the object of our life. By this "man" - whom the Targum calls Man of God or Gabriel - Philo means the Logos. So here the incarnate Logos puts to the two companions the question 'What seek ye?' - the probability of a mystical meaning is increased by the occurrence, in the context (1.38) of the phrase 'Come and ye shall see.'<sup>2</sup>

Surely this is an unwarranted reading into John's Gospel - a meaning that is not there. The question, "What seek ye?" "is quite intelligible as a straightforward piece of narrative."<sup>3</sup>

There is a strong tendency in Abbott to find inner meanings in John through an interpretation of it by Philo and Origen. The occurrence of *κλίνω κεφαλὴν* in Matthew, Luke, and John

<sup>1</sup>At this point we are reminded of the works of Austin Farrer on St. Mark. In one place, for example, he intimated that the number of swine in v.13 "about two thousand" may represent the unclean enemies of God symbolised by swine. In the context he noticed that the next mention of thousand is the thousands of people fed by Christ (vi.33-34). These are God's friends symbolised by sheep. This exemplifies that God destroys His enemies and saves His sheep. (Austin Farrer, St. Matthew and St. Mark, pp. 107, 108.)

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 488, f.n. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, Johannine Vocabulary, op. cit., p. 10.

is taken as evidence that John knew the Double Tradition and alluded to it. Abbott's translation of the Johannine passage was "... (lit.) having reclined his head he delivered up his spirit."<sup>1</sup> The context in Matthew and Luke is different from John's. In the Double Tradition Jesus says "... the Son of man hath not where to recline his head. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Abbott believes that Matthew and Luke used this phrase in a literal sense; John in a spiritual one - i.e., to refer to our Lord's finding rest for His head on the bosom of the Father.<sup>3</sup> He believed that Origen touched on the spiritual truth in this phrase with the declaration that Jesus could not 'lay his head' in Jerusalem but only in Bethany as being 'the House of obedience.' According to Chrysostom our Lord in the Matthew-Luke passage had in mind that the labourer could not rest in any literal place for rest required that he recline in the bosom of the Father. Abbott concludes:

According to this view, our Lord, in His reply to the scribe, does not mean to insist on the fact that He had no fixed abode of His own, and, still less, to suggest that there were not many friends and devoted disciples ready to give Him hospitality. His real meaning was that, in the scribe's sense of the term, the Son of man had no 'resting place.'<sup>4</sup>

This furnishes a good example of how Abbott used the interpretations of John by allegorists such as Origen not only to give the meaning of the Fourth Gospel but the Synoptics as well. However, it reads meaning that is not at all obvious into Jesus' answer to the scribe and into

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Vocabulary, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 329.



John's statement.

We have already shown that Abbott took  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$  to mean 'elder brother.' He was greatly influenced by Origen to accept that meaning.<sup>1</sup>

The weight which Abbott gave in general to Origen's interpretations prompted Moulton to comment on Johannine Grammar:

. . . the spiritual interpretations which in this book either underlie the history or are to be substituted for it go beyond anything we have seen in modern times; we seem to be studying the allegorical expositions of Origen's school.<sup>2</sup>

The extremely close parallel between John and the Alexandrian allegorists, which is assumed in Abbott, is not warranted. This is due not only to the evidence of historical facts in John, but also to the fact that John shares concepts and wording with Palestinian Judaism, as the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown us. The Qumran scrolls which contain "typical Essene diction," illustrative of John, had not been discovered in Abbott's day. Also, in the field of Septuagint studies there are present day aids such as a critical apparatus, not available in Abbott's time, which traces out the origin and significance of the variants from the different versions of the Septuagint.<sup>3</sup> Besides, considerable work has been done on the papyri, since Abbott's work on Johannine language appeared, giving scholars a better understanding of their significance for the study of the Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 11-12 in Johannine Grammar.

<sup>2</sup>Moulton, 'Review of Johannine Grammar,' op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>3</sup>See P. Katz, "Septuagintal Studies in the Mid-Century" in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, eds. W.D. Davies and D. Daube. pp. 176-2

<sup>4</sup>F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, trans. Robert W. Funk, p. xxiii, xxiv. This work lists works, including catalogues of papyri together with papyri and inscriptions, which appeared after Abbott's works on Johannine language were published.



Today, "there can be little doubt that the origins of Johannine style must be sought after in Essene circles."<sup>1</sup> In both John and the Dead Sea scrolls there is a similar "iteration" of a few basic themes.<sup>2</sup> Also, St. John's Gospel and the scrolls contain common themes such as unity and community<sup>3</sup> and the dualism in the scrolls is so similar to that in John that "in no other literature do we have so close a terminological and ideological parallel to Johannine usage."<sup>4</sup> John appears to have drawn from a group of terms and ideas which was known and used by the Essenes.<sup>5</sup> Abbott's perspective, which did not include the scrolls, necessarily limits the value of his works on John. To be sure, John "is both Jewish, because of the Palestinian background of its traditions, and Greek, because of the environment in which it was moulded as a finished product."<sup>6</sup> But the tendency today is to realise that John has its closest similarities with Palestinian Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

Abbott's interpretation of John by Origen and Philo led him into the error of finding recondite meanings in John which are not there.

However, it was with these illustrative materials that Abbott gave his exposition of John's meaning. With the understanding they gave him, he collected and classified John's words. He declared that

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<sup>1</sup>Gross, op. cit., p. 155, f.n. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>4</sup>Erister Stendahl, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," The Scrolls and the New Testament, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup>H.H. Rowley, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, p. 27. F.M. Braun gives a list of instances where the Scrolls contain close verbal similarities to John in xvii.3, viii. 2, I John v.21, v.33, xii.36, iii.36. (F.M.Braun, 'L' Arriere-fond Juif de l'Quatrieme Evangile et la Communaute de l'Alliance,' "Revue Biblique," LXII.1, 1955, pl2.)

<sup>6</sup>A.J.B. Higgins, The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel, pp. 15,16.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

John's "minute grammatical distinctions should not be stigmatized as pedantry" and added, "the business of the Grammar will be to collect and classify these and other peculiarities so as to lead the way to an explanation that lies beyond the limits of a grammarian."<sup>1</sup> He attempted to solve the problem of which words in John are Christ's and which are the Evangelist's comments by John's grammar. He observed that "two words  $\delta\tau\epsilon$  and  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$  are used by John to express the conjunction 'for.'" For the most part, in Christ's words, he uses the former; in his own comments the latter."<sup>2</sup> However, the actual facts are not as clearly indicative of the source of the Fourth Gospel's words as Abbott's statement here might lead us to believe. Abbott found that John uses  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$  about 27 times in Christ's words, about 9 times in the words of other speakers, and about 27 times in "strict narrative."<sup>3</sup> Surely we should have some clear explanation from Abbott, which we do not have, as to how to distinguish between comment and "strict narrative." However, the statistics do not solve this problem as Abbott had hoped.

There were other collections in Abbott's works on John's words which were very significant for Abbott's thought as a whole. Abbott produced statistical tables containing the record of how many times key Johannine words were used by the Synoptics. It was his opinion that John is very allusive, containing references to "sayings of the earlier

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

gospels" which are sometimes given "in an unexpected manner, and with new application. . . ."<sup>1</sup> His statistical tables helped him to conclude that John purposely avoids the words and phrases of the Synoptic vocabulary, particularly those words and meanings found in Luke.<sup>2</sup> This was of first importance in his theory of Johannine intervention which held that John intervenes in favour of Mark where Luke deviates from Mark's language. One of the main reasons he published these works on Johannine language was to present the word evidence on which his theory of Johannine intervention is based.

His tables of 'Johannine and Synoptic Disagreements' and 'Johannine and Synoptic Agreements'<sup>3</sup> show much industry and make a major contribution to Gospel studies; but his theory of Johannine intervention, that he derives from them, assumes an undue amount of subtlety and allusiveness on the Fourth Evangelist's part. By actual count in one of Abbott's books there are over one hundred instances of so-called Johannine intervention. All of these concern rather minute points in the Gospels. For example, Mark xv.40 has "salome;" Matthew xxvii.55f has "mother of the sons of Zebedee;" Luke xxiii.49 tells nothing about Salome; John xiv.25 has 'his (i.e., Christ's) Mother's sister.' Abbott declares that Mark preserves an ancient tradition and that the Talmuds "Imma" or "Emma" is connected with Salome. Also, in the Midrash "Imma"

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, Apologia, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Johannine Vocabulary, op. cit., pp. 153-347.

means "the mother" and "Salome" means "peace." In connecting Mark with John, Abbott observed that "Salome" in Hebrew might be used literally or allusively as Shel-imma, i.e., "belonging to the Mother." Another play on this word is "Shalom" meaning "peace" and "Salome" would mean "my peace." In this way he connects John with "Salome"; for although the Fourth Gospel never intervenes verbally to say that "Salome" means peace, "yet he does succeed in conveying to us from the beginning of the book of his Gospel, that the book was written by, or in the home of, a genuine 'son of Salome,' a genuine son of peace."<sup>1</sup> Such vague connections and subtlety of reasoning does not demonstrate Johannine intervention. However, the collections he made in the interest of this theory may be used, as has been done,<sup>2</sup> without following the theories which he based upon them.

Abbott made his collections in the light of the great subtlety he found in John's wording. He held that John has "synonymous words, iterations, and variations" together with "subtle shades of meaning denoted by slight variations of clause."<sup>3</sup> His chapter on Johannine synonyms<sup>4</sup> reveals how he allowed his notions about John's subtlety to give him an understanding of the collections he made. At the outset he declares,

The whole of this Gospel is pervaded with distinctions of thought, represented by subtle distinctions of word or phrase - words and phrases so far alike that at first

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold III, op. cit., pp. 119-122.

<sup>2</sup>For an example of such use, see Burney, The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit., pp. 57, 68.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Johannine Vocabulary, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-151.

the reader may take the thought to be the same, though it is always really different.<sup>1</sup>

One set of synonyms which he had in mind was ἀγαπᾶν and φιλεῖν

which he took to mean 'love' and 'like' respectively throughout John.

In view of the fact that both words are used to describe the disciple whom Jesus loved<sup>2</sup> and both are used for the love of the Father for the Son,<sup>3</sup> Abbott's theory is hardly valid throughout John. This example

shows that Abbott sometimes read subtlety into John when it was not

there. This is true also of his collection of variations in the

repetitions and quotations of John. He took such variations as λήμψεται

(xvi. 14) and λαμβάνει (xvi. 15) as John's attempt ". . . to

compel his readers to perceive that they have not before them Christ's

exact words, and that they must think of their spirit rather than of

the latter."<sup>4</sup> This is an illustration of the manner in which Abbott

was influenced by Origen in his explanations of John's variations. He

indicated the role that Origen played in this instance:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, op. cit., p. 486.

<sup>3</sup>Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 558. f.n. Abbott's comment on John v. 20 where φιλεῖν is used of the Father in relation to the Son was as follows:

... if we compare what Christ says later on where He declares that henceforth He will call all His disciples 'friends' because He intends to tell them all His secrets, we shall find that the meaning is, not that the Father 'loveth' the Son (which is assumed) but that the Son, to speak in metaphor, is of age to be a fellow - counsellor with the Father who treats Him as a friend, and 'sheweth him all that he himself doeth.'

(Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, op. cit., p. 104.) This is too hypothetical especially in light of the above explanation.

<sup>4</sup>Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, op. cit., p. 402.

Origen. . . connects the Feeding of the Five Thousand with the epithet 'fleshly' or 'carnal' as referring to the literal interpretation of Scripture (Huet i.263D); and he quotes - in connexion with the error of disciples taking 'leaven' and 'loaves' literally - Gal. iii.3 "Having begun in the spirit" and warns us against "running back to fleshly things" (Huet i. 269D).<sup>1</sup>

That these variations were put into the text of this Gospel by the Evangelist so we would not follow the 'letter' or 'flesh' of his words seems extremely unlikely; especially since, as we have shown, John's Gospel has closer affinities to Palestinian Judaism than Abbott imagined.

Abbott also discovered subtly placed twofold, threefold, and sevenfold repetitions in John. He assumed such repetitions were inserted by the Fourth Evangelist, who was ". . . a Jew trained to the study of the Bible in the literary school of Philo (though raised up above the narrower formalities of that school by the Spirit of Christ). . . ." <sup>2</sup> He held that the Evangelist followed Philo, who declared that there are two divine Words (verba), one, the pillar and support of the world of reason, the other of the world of sense.<sup>3</sup> Likewise in the threefold and sevenfold repetitions in John, Abbott imagined that John was following the principles of Philo<sup>4</sup> This assumes that the Fourth Gospel is written in an extremely complex style with intended Philonic repetitions scattered throughout. Such a theory does not reckon with a similar 'monotonous' style found in the Qumran Scrolls,<sup>5</sup> which are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 402f. f.n.3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 439. Abbott is quoting Philo on Exodus xxv.11-14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 461.

<sup>5</sup>Cross, op. cit., p. 155.



Palestinian in origin and presumably not influenced by the 'repetitions' of Philo.

To be sure, Abbott in his search for meaning in John's grammatical distinctions, brought out some important points. For instance, he took John x.38 to mean, "that ye may come to know definitely (γνῶτε) and that ye may continue in the ever growing knowledge (γινώσκητε) that the Father is in me." This translation is acceptable, but we cannot follow Abbott in the contention that this should prepare us "for a multitude of such minute grammatical distinctions"<sup>1</sup> when he has in mind John's attempt to give the spirit in protest to the Synoptist's letter.

Abbott's works on Johannine vocabulary and grammar were based upon the assumption that gospel problems could be solved by statistics and classification of literary evidence. We saw that this was true of other parts of Abbott's works such as his attempt to solve the problem of the relationship of the Synoptic Gospels by tracing their variations back to a Hebrew Original. In an article which is significant for our study of Abbott, Vincent Taylor found literary-critical arguments based on such things as the number of times a word occurs in a work and the style of the writers in several of Abbott's contemporaries such as H.J. Holtzmann, A. Harnack, W. Sanday, J.C. Hawkins, and B. H. Streeter. The criticism of this method found in these men applies to Abbott as well:

. . . while objective in the sense that it deals with facts of language and style, the literary-critical method is open to the charge of subjectivity. A

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Johannine Grammar, op. cit., p. 5f.



scholar may exaggerate the significance of differences in style, overlook agreements, and misconceive variations of usage and style.<sup>1</sup>

While Abbott made a point of being objective, of bringing evidence into his reasoning in his 'bee-criticism', he habitually read subjective meanings into his "evidence".

However, when Abbott's Johannine Vocabulary and Johannine Grammar appeared, they evidently filled a need. They called scholars' attention to the language of John, and they showed that a closer study of the New Testament language itself could be very rewarding. One reader remarked,

A century ago Littmann did good pioneer work on the synonyms of the New Testament and Archbishop Trench's book is known, of course, to everyone. But Dr. Abbott shows - and as the reader has his eyes thus opened, he is astounded that he was so blind - that there is an infinite deal still to be observed and interpreted in the very language of the New Testament writers.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott's works provided important statistics concerning the words in the Gospels which have aided later scholars in Gospel criticism. Also, his word studies, coming as they did before many "word books" which have subsequently appeared,<sup>3</sup> made him a pioneer in this field.

#### IV. THE RELATION OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Abbott's last main work, The Fourfold Gospel, is chiefly concerned with the relation between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels.

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<sup>1</sup>V. Taylor, 'Modern Issues in Biblical Studies', "The Expository Times", Vol. LXXI, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>T. Necklin, 'Review of Johannine Vocabulary', "Classical Review", Vol. XX, 1906, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>For example: A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament and Theologisches Worterbuch Zum Neuen Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich.

The theory by which he attempted to explain this relationship was called "Johannine Intervention." This is so much an integral part of The Fourth Gospel that Abbott once entitled this work, while it was still in manuscript form, Johannine Interventions.<sup>1</sup>

He believed that John intervened "in behalf of Mark, in order to explain harsh or obscure Marcan expressions altered or omitted by Luke (and sometimes by Matthew also)."<sup>2</sup> John had the rolls of the three Synoptic Gospels lying open before him while he wrote. Before John put many of his words on paper, he consulted the other Gospels to see what each wrote and especially to see where Luke and Matthew had departed from Mark.<sup>3</sup>

During Abbott's time the question of the relationship between John and the Synoptists was settled in favour of the proposition that John was acquainted with all the Synoptic Gospels or at least with some of them.<sup>4</sup> B.H. Streeter subsequently argued that John was dependent upon Mark and Luke. He believed the evidence pointed toward the conclusion that John did not use Matthew.<sup>5</sup> Abbott based his theory of Johannine intervention on the evidence presented by words and phrases John contained in common with Mark as compared to the differences between John and Matthew and Luke. Gardner-Smith challenged the theory that John was dependent on the Synoptic Gospels. He attributed the words and

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., p. 421.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>4</sup>P. Gardner-Smith, Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels, p. vii.

<sup>5</sup>Streeter, The Four Gospels, op. cit., pp. 396, 425.

phrases common to John and the Synoptics to the fact that the evangelists "drew upon the common store of Christian tradition."<sup>1</sup> He also called attention to the fact that the correspondences between St. John and the Synoptics ". . . form a small minority among the far more numerous passages in which the discrepancies are many and glaring."<sup>2</sup>

That John had our first three gospels before him in written form can no longer be accepted as beyond question; many modern scholars deny that he did. As one recently put it, "I notice a widespread tendency today, which I fully endorse to regard the case for literary dependence [by John on the Synoptics] as quite unproven and indeed quite improbable."<sup>3</sup> Another declared, "all we can safely say now is that St. John was generally familiar with the oral tradition which was worked into shape in the Synoptics, but that he went his own masterful way in writing his Gospel."<sup>4</sup> This seriously questions Abbott's assumption that John had the other Gospels before him when he wrote.

Even if John had the Synoptics before him, it is not probable nor hardly possible, that he wrote many of his words only after he consulted

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, *op. cit.*, p. 96. W.F. Howard and C. H. Dodd give their authority to this view (*Ibid.*, f.n. 7). Others holding the same view are: E. Hoskyns (*Hoskyns, op. cit.*, p. 92;); F.C. Grant (*Grant, The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth, op. cit.*, p. 157f.); and J.A.B. Higgins (*Higgins, 'Recent Trends in the Study of the Fourth Gospel,' op. cit.*, p. 124.) Higgins is convinced that the Fourth Gospel is independent of the Synoptic Gospels (*Higgins, The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit.*, p. 13). However, R. H. Lightfoot, mainly on the basis that the verbal resemblances between John and the first three gospels "are unlikely to be accidental," believes that the fourth evangelist "knew not only the synoptic tradition, but the three synoptic gospels themselves." (*R.H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel*, p. 29.)

<sup>4</sup>Hunter, 'Recent Trends in Johannine Studies,' *op. cit.*, p. 219.

the exact wording of the other Gospels. At one place Abbott related that John ". . . will be regarded as looking forward in his Gospel rather than backward - forward to the needs of Christ's church rather than backward to the exact record of His acts and words in Galilee and Judaea."<sup>1</sup>

This is another of Abbott's general statements and it should be subjected to scrutiny. In actual practice Abbott's theory of Johannine intervention weighs so heavily with him that he gives the impression that John, with a great concern for minutiae, constantly observed the literary evidence of the Synoptic Gospels. The extent to which Abbott used the evidence of short phrases and minor points to establish this hypothesis is illustrated in his discussion of the Baptist's words to Jesus, "There cometh after (or behind) me"<sup>2</sup> in Mark. Luke omits "after (or, behind) me" and Abbott believes John intervenes. With the rolls of the Synoptic Gospels lying open before him, John thought aloud and said,

Luke omits 'behind me' because he thinks it implies that the Lord was the Baptist's inferior; but if the Lord from heaven followed 'behind' the Baptist for a time on earth, that is not a thing for His disciples to be ashamed of as though it denied that the Lord was 'before' the Baptist in nature and in eternal pre-existence. Mark's phrase, therefore, ought not to be passed over but rather set forth more fully so as to explain its meaning.<sup>3</sup>

That John compared the Gospels of Luke and Mark in their accounts of this

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<sup>1</sup>Fourfold II, op. cit., pp. xii, xiii, xiv. It is hard to conceive of a human being who could have looked forward and backward in the manner which Abbott suggests here.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

saying before he wrote his own account of it and, noticing their differences on the phrase, 'behind me', intervened in Mark's favour seems to be a pure assumption. This sounds more like what Abbott would have done in the modern age of concordance rather than what our Fourth Evangelist without such works would have done. Abbott assumes that John is interested in verbal differences as much as he is and that he can use such textual 'evidence' as that above to establish his hypotheses. In the Johannine context the pre-existence of Christ is stressed in more verses than the one to which Abbott refers. This was the subject with which John was dealing. It was not necessary that he refer to the verbal differences found in the Synoptic Gospels before he chose his wording. The Johannine language appears to have been dictated more by the Johannine context than by any desire to intervene in favour of Mark. Abbott believed that John intervenes in favour of Mark in I John. He suggested,

The Parable of the Sower, as explained in Mark and Matthew, concludes with the mention of three classes of fruit bearers as the result of the seed in the good ground. Luke mentions but one class. If the sowing typifies a spiritual generating of believers, then we may perhaps point to the three stages of belief apparently denoted in the Johannine Epistle, (I John ii. 12 as foll.) corresponding to what Luke omits.<sup>1</sup>

If we accept this point of Abbott's, we must picture John consulting the vocabulary of the Synoptic Gospels as he wrote his epistles as well as when he wrote his Gospel. This seems far-fetched and highly improbable.

Although there is some verbal evidence for Johannine intervention, much of it is made up of short words or phrases such as "after (or behind

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

me," as in the examples shown above. These are inconclusive and probably coincidental in themselves. They are not sufficient to establish Abbott's theory. Besides, there is other verbal evidence that goes against Johannine intervention. There are verbal identities and similarities peculiar to John and Luke:

Only in these two Gospels do we meet the sisters Martha and Mary (Lk, x.38-42; John xi-xii) and, although John alone introduces their brother Lazarus, Luke has the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, concluding with the word of Jesus about rising from the dead (Lk. xvi. 19-31).<sup>1</sup>

Also, Marcan and Johannine differences go against Johannine intervention. These are found in such vital matters as: (1) chronology, including the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the length of his ministry, and the date of Jesus' crucifixion;<sup>2</sup> (2) the scene of Jesus' ministry;<sup>3</sup> and (3) the absence from John of any real suggestion of development in Jesus' understanding of His own Person and Mission that we find in such Marcan turning-points as the Baptism and Temptation.<sup>4</sup> These Johannine deviations from Mark are indeed considerable. They make it practically impossible to believe that John intervened for Mark. Nor does such a theory account for the difference between the Matthew-Luke and the Johannine treatment of Mark as a source. That John ". . . should have treated a source like Mark, about one-fourth a century

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<sup>1</sup>Higgins, 'Recent Trends in the Study of the Fourth Gospel,' op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>MacGregor, The Gospel of John, op. cit., p. xiif.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. xix.

after its composition, with so much freedom is indeed a remarkable phenomenon, especially if we have regard to the very different procedures of our first and third evangelists."<sup>1</sup> John's treatment of Mark and Luke cannot be explained by Johannine intervention. Abbott failed to prove this theory and no living scholar follows it.

Abbott's attempt thus to explain the occurrence of the same or similar words in John and Mark, where they are omitted in the other Gospels, is comparable to his explanation of the variations of Synoptic phrases by the hypothesis of an original Hebrew Gospel. They are both ingenious theories which have "facts" behind them but the "facts" do not lead to the hypotheses which Abbott suggests.

In presenting his hypothesis of Johannine intervention, Abbott gave some instances where he believed John corrected Mark<sup>2</sup> and added to Mark.<sup>3</sup> Also, it was his belief that John supplemented the Synoptist's doctrine.<sup>4</sup> The point on which Abbott insisted was that John is the authority by which all the other Gospels must be judged. He believed that John had the authority to intervene for Mark and to correct or add to all the Gospels.

In one sense it might appear that Abbott occupied a mediating position concerning the relation between John and the Synoptics, as

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, 'The Fourth Gospel and Some Recent Criticism,' op. cit., p.736.

<sup>2</sup>Fourfold IV, op. cit., O p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.



did of the writers of the liberal 'Lives of Jesus' during the nineteenth century,<sup>1</sup> since he maintained that John intervened in favour of Mark. However, the case for Johannine intervention was built up by showing the numerous short phrases and so-called literary parallels (although the parallels were often drawn without regard to the context in which they were found). Then, when it came to matters of interpretation, Abbott managed to show to his own satisfaction that John had spiritualised the materialistic Synoptic message. In effect, he rewrote the Synoptics, making them a 'Johannine' Gospel with his peculiar meaning attached to 'Johannine.'

The choice of John as the Gospel by which all the other Gospels should be judged enabled Abbott to interpret the Synoptic Gospels so as to eliminate that which he found hard to accept. He argued that the original stilling of the storm referred to the time when Jesus, after the Resurrection, returned to the disciples "across the waters of sheol."<sup>2</sup> Since he could call this incident "primarily a spiritual poem" about the three days that followed Jesus' death, he made the suggestion that Mark's sequel, the curing of the demoniac, may be "another version of what happened during those 'three days.'"<sup>3</sup> All three Synoptists refer to "the tombs," and Abbott puts this account in his fourfold gospel because John mentions 'the tombs' in verses 28 and 29. John's words, "The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have

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<sup>1</sup>Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, op. cit., p.218.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment," are taken to predict or describe the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison during the three days after His death.<sup>1</sup> With this as a springboard Abbott argued that the cure of the demoniac in the Synoptic Gospels was originally a story about casting out evil spirits in another world during the time between Jesus' death and resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

In the preceding sections of this chapter we saw how Abbott denied any substantial apostolic authority to the Fourth Gospel and spiritualised it through Philo and others. Through his theory of Johannine intervention, he attempted to spiritualise the Synoptics through John thus making them a part of his Fourfold Gospel. We must discount Abbott's Johannine intervention. This means that the foundation and scaffolding on which Abbott built his fourfold spiritualised gospel has fallen, taking Abbott's non-miraculous gospel with it.

We have seen that, to a great extent, Abbott gave a false interpretation of the part of John on which he commented. He also leaves a false impression of John as a whole in making it the key to his non-miraculous gospel. As a matter of record, this Gospel contains accounts of many miracles. They are signs, or eschatological events, which have been selected in order that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John xx.30f).<sup>3</sup> The Fourth Evangelist gives 'nature miracles' special emphasis, a truth which is particularly significant

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-88.

<sup>3</sup>Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, op. cit., p. 64.

since Abbott rejects all such miracles. There is a manifest tendency in this Gospel to heighten the miraculous. Miracles are performed on one who was ill for thirty-eight years, one who was blind, and one who was dead for four days. Also, for this Evangelist Jesus' death and resurrection ". . . are the supreme *σημεῖον*."<sup>1</sup> Miraculous signs played a more significant part in this Gospel than Abbott's theory of Johannine intervention leads us to believe. In what Abbott omitted as well as in what he included of this Gospel his criticism presents, in the main, a false picture of it.

We have found that Abbott denied apostolic authority to the Fourth Gospel and took it to be a tradition that evolved through Hellenistic Judaism, especially Philo, and Jewish poetic writings such as the Odes of Solomon. Then he spiritualised John's meaning. By such criticism Abbott did not account for John's historicity.

When Abbott's critical method of extracting the kernel from the husk in the Gospels is put to the test, it will not stand up. This is true in spite of the manifold 'evidence' upon which he based his hypotheses in his inductive process. Not only was his an incomplete induction, the 'evidence' for his hypotheses was not valid. It did not point to his hypotheses. Consequently, in spite of his collection of much evidence in support of his theories, those theories were little more than a curtain behind which he went about his work of finding in the Gospels a Gospel which his philosophy would allow him to accept. We have shown that this is true of his criticism of John in this chapter and of the Synoptics in the previous chapter. We shall now see that this is true also of other parts of his work.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

## CHAPTER V

### ABBOTT AS BIBLICAL HISTORIAN

We shall deal in this chapter with Abbott's work on the Graeco-Jewish background of the Gospels. We have already dealt with Abbott's work on Philo and the Odes of Solomon. Here we will be concerned primarily with other phases of the background in an attempt to determine what significance this material had for Abbott. His writings on this subject are: Silanus the Christian, Notes on New Testament Criticism, and his romances, Philochristus and Onesimus which are set in New Testament times. Of course, his interest in the background of the Gospels permeates most of his work. First we will consider the Greek background.

#### The Greek Background

On some points Abbott acknowledged that there is a difference between Johannine and stoic thought. Whereas the stoic doctrine is that man should be free from trouble, the Fourth Gospel on three different occasions states that Christ was troubled.<sup>1</sup> Also, he says that while Epictetus pictures Hercules leaving his children without a regret or mention of a future return, "John exhibits Christ as sympathising with those whom He is leaving, and as consoling them with the thought that He will come to them. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Epictetus said that thirst

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<sup>1</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 282. He referred to John xi.33, xii.27, xiii.21.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Notes on New Testament Criticism, op. cit., p. 5.

ought not to be experienced by the Son of God; but John xix.28 quotes Jesus as saying "I thirst."<sup>1</sup>

However, at other places Abbott virtually equated the teachings of John's Gospel and the Stoics. He did not hesitate to interpret the Fourth Gospel by some words of Epictetus, indicating how the former had advanced the thought of the latter. He declared,

Instead of a Kingdom and instead of the laws of a King, the Fourth Gospel proclaims Nature; only, of course, not materialistically, not a mere machinery, but, as we might put it, Mother Nature. According to Epictetus, "Nature is of all things the most powerful in man and draws him to her desire"<sup>1</sup> and he says elsewhere that there is nothing to which man is so much drawn as to the Eu-Logos<sup>2</sup>; and Man is by Nature created for "fellowship." John represents the Eu-Logos, or Good Logos, as one with the Father in the Spirit of Fellowship. But he also represents Him as incarnate and as revealing the Spirit of Fellowship at a height never before reached. The beast dies for the herd fighting against the wolves, the man dies for his country against foreigners. Both are inspired by Mother Nature, the Spirit of Fellowship. But the incarnation of the Good Logos dies as a Jew, crucified by Jews for "all men" alike with the prediction, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" - i.e., I will draw all men into harmony with Nature.<sup>2</sup>

If we were to follow Abbott in the views expressed here, we would find in the Gospel of John and in Stoicism verifications of his philosophy. But we cannot follow him when he speaks of the Logos of the Stoics and of John in the same paragraph, virtually equating the two. One pointed out the difference here when he wrote,

Logos was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew dabar ('word'), which always means

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Johannine Vocabulary, op. cit., pp. 190, 191.

the spoken word. It is this Hebrew meaning, not the idea of the immanent reason, that is the formative element in the Johannine conception.<sup>1</sup>

When Abbott speaks of the incarnation of the Good Logos in the same context with the incarnation of the logos in man and beast without distinguishing these incarnations except to say that Christ reveals "the Spirit of Fellowship at a height never before reached," he abolishes the authentic uniqueness of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. We must keep in mind that "Stoicism does indeed have the idea of incarnation, but it is only such incarnation as occurs in every human being. This is very different from the unique, supernatural incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> Besides this, Abbott wrongly interprets the words of Christ in John xii.32. Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John x.30). It was to Him in His oneness with the personal Father, not to (mother) nature (and even for Abbott there must be some difference else why does he stress harmony with nature) that Jesus promised to draw men.

Stoicism, with its belief in the existence of immanent logos or reason, closely resembled Abbott's philosophy which stressed the immanence of God to such an extent that he equated God and nature.<sup>3</sup> Abbott did not adequately take into account the difference between Johannine thought on the one hand and his own and stoic thought on the other.

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<sup>1</sup>Strachan, The Fourth Gospel, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>S. Vernon McCasland, "The Graeco-Roman World," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, eds. George A. Buttrick, et. al., p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter II.

In his desire to harmonize Greek thought and John, or to expound John through use of stoic teachings, he sometimes painted a false picture of stoic philosophy. He even appears to suggest that Epictetus advanced beyond polytheism. He makes Silanus say of Epictetus,

It was for Zeus alone, as God, that our Teacher reserved his devotion. And for Him he displayed a passionate enthusiasm, the absolute sincerity of which it never entered into my mind to question; nor do I question it now.<sup>1</sup>

This is what the student infers from Epictetus' teaching, but it is difficult to see how he could have arrived at this summation without the help of Abbott. Earlier Silanus had heard Epictetus declare,

The philosophers say that we must in the first place learn this, the existence of God, and that He provides for the universe, and that nothing - whether deed or purpose or thought - can lie hidden from Him. In the next place [We must learn] of what nature They (i.e., the Gods) are. For, of whatever nature They may be found to be, he that would fain please Them and obey [Them] must needs endeavour (to the best of his ability) to be made like unto Them.<sup>2</sup>

Here Epictetus is quoted as speaking of the 'Gods'. One scholar has observed that for Epictetus God was but a form of matter which was absolutely predetermined. He added that the result of Epictetus' doctrine was "... for our modern thinking an almost incredible mixture of Theism, Pantheism, and Polytheism, and it is impossible out of detached expressions, to construct a consistent system."<sup>3</sup> If we take "Polytheism" out of this

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Silanus the Christian, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>W. A. Oldfather, Epictetus, Vol. I, p. xciv.



sentence, we would also have a good description of Abbott. Epictetus' teachings show that the above estimate is true. For him ". . . God is the father of men as well as of gods. . . ." We ought to be aware that we are ". . . a son of Zeus. . . ." All these different terms for deity are used in the same context. (Book I, III. 1,2.)<sup>1</sup> In the light of this statement it is misleading to say that it was for Zeus alone, as God, that Epictetus reserved his devotion. This is not only true because of this evidence to the contrary, but because Zeus cannot be spoken of as God alone, if one is to be accurate, without defining more completely the meaning of God as applied to Zeus. We shall return to this point presently, but a belief in Zeus as God alone is not Christian monotheism.

We must keep clearly in mind the great difference between Stoicism and Christianity. Stoicism never achieved monotheism,<sup>2</sup> and it was unable to point to its "wise man incarnate" as Christianity points to Christ. Although evidence is available that Stoicism advocated astral immortality, actually immortality was inconsistent with stoic thought; for Stoicism ". . . strictly speaking, consistently with its physics was obliged to deny this faith, and many noble Stoics were heroically content with a return to the elements, such as Panaetius, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>McCasland, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>S. Angus, The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World, p. 30. Abbott quotes Epictetus as saying that at death men go "to the elements." (Abbott, Onesimus, op. cit., p. 147.)

The parallel which Abbott drew between ancient Greek religion and Christianity destroys the distinctiveness of the latter. At one place Abbott quoted Epictetus as saying that ". . . He (Hercules) thought God to be His Father and fixing his eyes on Him did everything that He did."<sup>1</sup> He places this quotation under the heading of ". . . Epictetian features in the Son of God that should be compared with corresponding Johannine features."<sup>2</sup> The corresponding Johannine feature here is found in John v. 19, "The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father doing."<sup>3</sup> There are definite differences between these Epictetian and Johannine passages. The father of Hercules is Zeus who is the offspring of Cronus and Rhea, not God, who being ungenerated, is eternal (Genesis 1.1). Besides, for the Stoics God was impersonal.<sup>4</sup> Nor can we speak of the Epictetian 'son of God' as corresponding to the Johannine 'Son' (v.19) without erring, unless we make quite clear the difference between the two concepts. The stoic doctrine teaches that all men are sons of God as a result of their belief that intelligence in men is a fragment of universal divine Reason.<sup>5</sup> Abbott, who believed in 'quasi Pantheism,' retained such terms as 'God' and 'son of God' and included under them both Greek religious ideas and Biblical terms without drawing proper distinction between the realities

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Notes on New Testament Criticism, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>McCasland, op. cit., p. 86. Oldfather takes it as proven that Epictetus' doctrines ". . . were the conventional ones of Stoicism representing rather the teaching of the early Stoics than that of the middle and later schools. . . ." (Oldfather, op. cit., p. xx.)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

and ideas these words are used to express. This was the unwarranted procedure by which he found a close parallel between Stoicism and John's Gospel.

Abbott's Pantheism left little room for belief in any religion which was distinct and unique in the world. He imagined that God had revealed Himself in Greek religion and that at many essential points Greek religion paralleled Christianity not only in wording but in meaning, too. Abbott shared this outlook with the 'History of Religions' school which was then in existence in Germany. He did not hesitate to assume that words spoken by Epictetus and contained in the Bible had the same meaning. At one place he quoted Epictetus as teaching that a father who has lost a child in death must not say, "I have lost my child," but "I have given it back." He makes Scaurus say, "I had recently met something like (this) in my books of Hebrew poems, 'The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"<sup>1</sup> Epictetus' conception of existence after death is brought out in the statement that at death one goes ". . . to nothing you need fear, but back to that from which you came, to what is friendly and akin to you, to the physical elements." (Book II, III. 13,14.)<sup>2</sup> The idea of returning to the elements and going to the Lord do not sound like the same thing to one who does not share Abbott's pantheistic immanentism.

For Ernest Troeltsch, the systematic theologian of the 'History of Religions' school, God is ". . . immanent reason, rather than the

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Silanus the Christian, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Oldfather, Epictetus, Vol. II, p. 93.

sovereign Lord of all things."<sup>1</sup> Abbott finds parallels to John's Gospel in Epictetus' thought in much the same way that Troeltsch found parallels to Christianity in non-Christian religion. Troeltsch held that all religion has "a common goal in the Unknown," and that all religion ". . . has a common ground in the Divine Spirit ever pressing the finite mind onward. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

In Abbott's works on Epictetus he appears to equate God and the immanent reason of Epictetus. Such a syncretism fails to give a correct understanding either of the Greek background of the Gospel or of the Gospel itself; thus it doubly errs. The New Testament offers men pardoned fellowship with God, but this is ". . . realised solely within the radius of Christ's influence."<sup>3</sup> For Abbott, it does not appear that Christ has such a unique place.

Consequently, although Abbott was alive to the significance of the Hellenistic background of the Gospel, his viewpoint caused him to assign erroneous meanings both to stoic and Christian doctrine in his attempt to equate the two. We must be aware of this if we are to understand his works. However, he fails to convince us that the revelation of Christ is not unique and that the Greek background of the Gospels should not be understood in the light of this uniqueness.

Although Abbott pointed out some differences between Johannine and Greek thought, he failed to do so on such important matters as the

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<sup>1</sup>Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Troeltsch, Christian Thought its History and Application, trans. by various hands, p. 321.

doctrines of God, of Christ, and of immortality. His philosophy and his resultant ideas did not permit him to make the clear-cut distinctions which exist between Stoicism and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The synthesis which he attempted to make of Christianity, Greek thought, and his own philosophy obscured the true nature of Greek thought and of Johannine doctrine.

### The Jewish Background

Abbott's philosophy also greatly influenced him in his work on the Jewish background of the New Testament. In one of his works he gave a collection of quotations from the Targums and the Talmuds on the subject of Bath Kol.<sup>2</sup> Using these together with other Jewish thought on such subjects as "dove," he attempted to uncover the original behind the Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus. At this point Abbott depended upon his hypothesis of an Original Hebrew Gospel in establishing his theory of the history of the text. Through a change of קִיץ, "firmament," some of the non-canonical accounts of Jesus' baptism may have dropped the statement, found in Mark 1.10, that the heavens were rent. One of the reasons he gives to make this hypothesis seem probable is that the word "dove" occurs in the context and the first mention of "birds" in Genesis connects them with "the firmament" (Genesis 1.20)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Greek terms such as regeneration and κύριος which have been taken over and used in the New Testament were adopted to express Christian thought to the Hellenistic world. However, the realities these words are used to convey cannot be grasped until we examine the Jewish and Christian backgrounds out of which they came in which the Christian Gospel was first expressed. When Christians spoke of their Saviour as κύριος, they did not mean that they placed Jesus among the many Greek gods. It has been well stated that "... the Hellenistic world knew many lords, just as it knew many gods; the Christian recognised only one Lord, the Lord Jesus, just as they recognised only one God, the Father. . . ." (F.W. Beare, The Communication of the Gospel in New Testament Times, p. 64.)

<sup>2</sup>FLTS, op. cit., pp. 429-442.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 79, 80.

Later he attempts to explain the origin of "dove" found in all four of our Gospels in the account of Jesus' baptism with the hypothesis that in the original Gospel "rest" or some form of it such as "he will rest," was corrupted into "dove".<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that this latter corruption ("rest" for "dove") would have had to take place prior to the first corruption mentioned above. This fact certainly makes the theory of an Original Hebrew Gospel, as Abbott presents it, very improbable; yet, his argument here is based firmly on the theory that the Gospel was written in Hebrew and its text extensively corrupted.

Abbott desired to eliminate the statement that the Spirit appeared "as a dove" through the theory that Hebrew corruption of some form of "rest" lies behind the Gospel's "dove." He observed that as far as the word "dove" in Jewish literature is concerned,

. . . apart from (1) the story of the dove in the Deluge, (2) the prescriptions of the sacrifices of turtle-doves and young pigeons, and (3) a few expressions of endearment in the Song of Solomon . . . and two mentions of the word in the Psalms . . . , we may say that the use of the word is confined to prophecy . . . . In later Jewish literature . . . the Dove became the recognised emblem of captive or exiled Israel sorrowfully longing for the restoration of Zion and fleeing to Jehovah for succour.<sup>2</sup>

However, Strack-Billerback declared,

. . . die Taube ist in der rabbin. Literatur mehrfach Sinnbild der Gemeinde Israel; a dass sie auch als Symbol des Geistes Gottes gegolten habe,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 107, 106.

lasst sich nur in sehr<sup>1</sup> beschränktem Masse  
wahrscheinlich machen.

Actually Abbott noted that Wetstein (Commentary on the New Testament, 1751) declared, "the Dove was believed by the ancient Jews to represent the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Then Wetstein quoted from the Talmud as follows, "the Spirit of God was borne upon the waters like a dove. . . that is brooding on her young. . . ."<sup>3</sup> To discount the significance of this evidence, Abbott declared that Wetstein

. . . appears in this case to have been led by the numerous instances of Western symbolism to attribute the same symbolism erroneously to one instance (that is all he quotes) which he assumes to represent the usage of 'the ancient Jews.'<sup>4</sup>

This is an extremely weak argument; it is hardly true that a commentator would say a usage was Jewish on the basis of the evidence that it was generally used as a western symbolism. He also attempted to discount Wetstein's quote from the Talmud because its source is Ben Zoma. He pictures Ben Zoma as one who on another occasion was described by Rabbi Yehoshua as being ". . . still out of his mind. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Ben Zoma had said, "I have been considering the distance between the upper and lower waters, and it is not more than the measure of three fingers; for it is said (Gen. 1.2) The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters - like a dove hovering over her young without touching them." Rabbi Yehoshua then told his disciples, "Ben Zoma is still out of his

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<sup>1</sup>H.L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium Nach Matthaus Erlautert Aus Talmud und Midrasch Vol. I, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



mind; for was it not on the first day that the Spirit of God is said to have hovered over the face of the waters, whereas the separation of the upper from the lower waters did not take place till the second day."<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Yehoshua corrects Ben Zoma, not on the fact that the Jews thought of the Spirit of God in terms of a dove, but on the question of when the separation of the upper from the lower waters occurred. Abbott's attempt to discredit Ben Zoma's saying is not successful. Even Abbott noted that passages in the Jerusalem Talmud which quote Ben Zoma ". . . record his opinions with obvious respect. . ." and that ". . . sayings of Ben Zoma (Aboth iv. 1-4) find a place in the present Jewish Prayer Book."<sup>2</sup> In the light of the evidence as a whole Abbott is hardly justified in declaring that whatever may have been Ben Zoma's meaning ". . . it is clear that the Jewish tradition, far from taking it as typical of the 'belief of the ancient Jews,' holds it up to ridicule as the heterodox and impossible conjecture of a demented heretic."<sup>3</sup> Rashi, who portrays the work of the Spirit in Genesis 1.2 as that of a dove that broods on the nest, usually represents "orthodox" Rabbinic opinion and the fact that he quotes Ben Zoma goes against the opinion that the Talmud discredited Ben Zoma's opinion here. In I. Abrahams opinion, if anyone understood the spirit of the Talmud it was Rashi, and the fact that he (like other Jewish commentators) adopts the simile of the dove is of itself enough to show that Ben Zoma's simile was not considered objectionable."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> I. Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First Series, p. 49.

What Abbott was particularly attempting to deny was that the Holy Spirit ". . . appeared visibly as a bird."<sup>1</sup> It seems that he is right in saying that ". . . it is extremely improbable that Ben Zoma intended to suggest [this] by the words 'like a dove' . . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, Abbott was not content thus to leave the matter. Instead, he attempted to dispel completely Ben Zoma's statement about the Spirit. Rather than admit that 'Spirit of God' and 'dove' had been associated together by the Jews, Abbott attempted to show that this association in the Gospels was the work of the Western Church, an addition which was alien to the Original Hebrew Gospel. This position can hardly be maintained.<sup>3</sup> It does not seem possible in the light of the Jewish background of the Gospels to limit all connexion between God and the dove to 'gentile literature,' in which, as Abbott shows, gods and human souls are likened to birds.<sup>4</sup> From his viewpoint western presuppositions contributed to the story of the Spirit descending on the Prince of Peace 'like a dove.' He stated that even if this story sprang from misunderstanding, it ". . . could not easily be dislodged from Christian Gospels, when once it had obtained a footing in non-Jewish Churches."<sup>5</sup>

Besides, Abbott cannot dismiss the weight of Genesis 1.2 by associating it with Ben Zoma. It has been well said, "Even without the Ben Zoma

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<sup>1</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup>After taking into account possible pagan parallels to the dove symbolism, Barrett concluded it is clear ". . . that not paganism but Judaism must contain the source of this feature of the tradition." (C.K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, op. cit., p. 38.)

<sup>4</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 109f.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

analogue one could hardly doubt that the Synoptists must have had Gen. 1.2 in mind."<sup>1</sup> Abbott failed in his attempt to make the evidence present only what he could accept and to ridicule and dismiss the evidence that contradicted what he wanted to find in the Jewish background of the baptism of Jesus.

Abbott also insisted that the Bath Kol or 'voice from heaven' was an accretion to a tradition which once did not contain it. Hillel had received a Bath Kol at the house of Gadia in Jericho ". . . about the birth-time of Christ. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Christian Evangelists teaching in about the middle of the first century

. . . with Hillel's memory fresh in their mind, would naturally be influenced by Hillel's precedent and by popular belief. Recording, for example, our Lord's baptism in the Jordan near Jericho and the descent of the Holy Spirit, they may well have said, "Can it be that in this very neighbourhood in beth Gadia of Jericho, Hillel was honoured by a Voice from Heaven - although he did not receive the Holy Spirit but was merely pronounced worthy of it - and that our Master, on whom the Holy Spirit actually descended, was not similarly honoured?" <sup>3</sup>

He explains the Spirit 'as a dove' as a western corruption and the 'voice from heaven' as a Jewish corruption. He does not account for the connexion in Jewish thought between the Bath Kol and the dove. Abbott believed that the absence from the Fourth Gospel of a Bath Kol at Jesus' Baptism may have resulted from the fact that Jews who lived after the Synoptists stated that ". . . matters of Law were to be determined

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<sup>1</sup>Abrahams, op. cit., p. 49f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

not by Bath Kol, but by the vote of the majority."<sup>1</sup> This decision came after a conflict between R. Joshua and R. Eliezer, who, Abbott adds, ". . . flourished between 100 A.D. and 130 A.D."<sup>2</sup> The Fourth Evangelist may have omitted the Bath Kol reasoning in this manner: "Do not the better teachers among the Jews themselves now agree that such a sign from heaven as this cannot be allowed to decide what is right or wrong for men?"<sup>3</sup> This not only assumes that John was written at a late date but that he had knowledge of the decision that resulted after the conflict between R. Joshua and R. Eliezer. Even if this were possible,<sup>4</sup> difficulties in accepting it still remain. If such logic had been in the Fourth Evangelist's mind, why did he include a record of a heavenly voice in John xii.28? Abbott interprets this latter Bath Kol as "a spiritual voice audible to none but those who had ears to hear it."<sup>5</sup> He accepts John xii.28 but discredits the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism as a narrative which was originated due to the belief that a voice should have come at Jesus' baptism. On the subject of a voice from heaven Abbott concluded,

. . . there was on no occasion any objective Voice from Heaven; but possibly on several occasions Christ's prayers were so answered from heaven as to give the disciples an

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>As to the probable date of John, see the section of 'Johannine Authorship and Date' in chapter IV.

<sup>5</sup>ELTS, op. cit., p. 359.

impression of a Word of God or Voice of God sent down from the Father to the Son.<sup>1</sup>

This does not account for the Gospel's authentic symbolism. Evidence other than that already mentioned associates the Holy Spirit and the dove: "A late Targum on Cant. 11.12 interprets the turtle-dove of the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Also, with the Jewish literature in mind, I. Abrahams observed that ". . . in several passages the Heavenly voice is represented as piping or chirping like a bird."<sup>3</sup> In one of the passages the Bath Qol is compared to a dove: "This occurs in the Babylonian Talmud (Berachoth 3a): 'I heard a Bath Qol moaning as a dove and saying: woe to the children through whose iniquities I laid waste my Temple.'<sup>4</sup> Abrahams added that it is this association of the heavenly voice ". . . that may underlie the Gospel narrative of the baptism, and at once illustrate and authenticate the symbolism of the Synoptists."<sup>5</sup> The appearance of the "Spirit like a dove" (Mark 1.10) and the accompanying "voice from heaven" (Mark 1.11) go together to indicate that in the Synoptic account of Jesus' baptism we are dealing with Jewish ideas. Abbott too readily dismisses the background material that associates the "dove" and the "voice" in his theory of the origin of the accounts of Jesus' baptism.

It is apparent from his treatment of the Gospel records of Jesus' Baptism that Abbott desired to eliminate from our Gospel accounts those

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>2</sup>J.M.Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 57. However, this evidence is late and is discounted by Strack and Billerbeck, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>Abrahams, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47f.

passages he found difficult to accept. Instead of seeing the meaning implied in the symbolical language, he sought to return to an Original that did not contain any supernatural elements in it. He used Jewish thought to develop theories which would account for the rise of supernatural elements in the Gospel narratives and explain them as later additions to an Original non-supernatural Gospel.

However, it has been shown that the Holy Spirit is closely associated in Jewish thinking with the coming of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Abbott does not bring out this point. Besides the Jewish writings to which Abbott referred, there are others which are pertinent and which help furnish the background through which we can better understand the Gospel accounts. In one of the two texts of Test. Jud. 24.2f, we find these words:

And the heavens shall be opened unto him,  
To pour out the spirit, (even) the blessing of  
the Holy Father;  
And he shall pour out the spirit of grace  
upon you. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Another similar passage which connects the person of the Messiah with the 'Messianic' gift of the Spirit is found in I Enoch 49.3:

In Him [the Elect One] dwells the Spirit  
of wisdom,  
And the Spirit which gives insight,  
And the Spirit of understanding and of might. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Such passages from the writings of Judaism indicate that the Holy Spirit was expected to be active in the ministry of the Messiah. It has been well said that in the accounts of Jesus' baptism, "as in the birth

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<sup>1</sup>Barratt, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 42

narratives, the Spirit is the creative activity of God which calls into being the conditions of the Messianic era."<sup>1</sup> The demonstration of this point by the passages just quoted helps to establish two points: (1) the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism is related in terms that were not unknown to Jews of the first century A.D.; (2) the coming of the Spirit has Messianic significance. This latter point indicates that Abbott's original here, which apparently would have retained a record of the Spirit coming upon Jesus, would not have been an unchristological account. As Barrett put it: "The work of the Spirit is to call into being part of the new creation of the Messianic days, namely, to inaugurate the ministry of the Messiah, and this Messianic conception underlies the whole intention and significance of the narrative. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Abbott failed both to recognise that Christology pervades this narrative and to establish the existence of an original narrative which has been subsequently altered and misinterpreted. Since, as William Manson declares, this narrative is "undoubtedly symbolical," we might understand it as follows:

That heaven opened implies that the summons to Jesus had its source in supernatural revelation. That the holy Spirit descended indicates that the call is to a work of God. The comparison like a dove need not imply the stillness with which the new vocation superimposed itself on the mind of Christ, for the similitude was familiar. The Rabbis explained the movement of the Spirit of God on the waters in Genesis 1.2 as like the brooding of a dove. Similarly the statement that a voice came from heaven reflects the Jewish conception of the "Bath Qol" or "daughter of the voice,"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



and implies that what Jesus heard was the echo of a decree promulgated in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Here Dr. Manson uses his knowledge of the Jewish background of the Gospel terminology to help him explain the symbolical meaning implied. Abbott, for the most part, used the Jewish background material in his effort to rewrite the text which he believed was corrupted by legend.

We have seen that this was the case in the narratives of Jesus' baptism. The same thing is true of his handling of the transfiguration. In his attempt to explain the transfiguration as a subjective experience of Peter and the other apostles, he quotes a pupil who declared of "an ordinary Rabbi," "I saw the son of Pedath sitting and searching the Scriptures even as Moses from the mouth of the Mighty one."<sup>2</sup> Peter, seeing Jesus at prayer, may have been convicted in his heart that Jesus was to those of His day as Moses and Elijah. Subsequently, the as may have dropped out and there may have arisen the account of the transfiguration as we now have it.<sup>3</sup> Here, also, he uses a quotation from Jewish literature in an effort to contrive a hypothesis which explains away a supernatural incident in the Gospels. This was characteristic of his work on the Jewish background of our Gospels.

In his works he makes references to the Jewish background of our Gospels which are not used directly in support of a hypothesis designed to eliminate some supernatural aspect of the Gospels. One such example

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>William Manson, The Gospel of Luke, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, ed. James Moffatt, p. 30f.

<sup>3</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 247.

is found in his discussion of "the most high" in Luke vi.35.<sup>1</sup> These, together with his collections of background material, have a more lasting value than do his hypotheses about such things as the origin of the accounts of Jesus' baptism. Also, Abbott's works are significant in that they show how he treated the Gospel records as an evolving tradition before later form-critics began to do so. Today, there has been a more thorough study of the Gospel's background than had been done in Abbott's time. One result of this, as Barrett has shown on Jesus' baptism, is that our present knowledge indicates that Abbott omitted important background material in the elaboration of his hypotheses.

The existence of a background of thought in which such phenomena as the voice from heaven is found furnishes us with material which will help to interpret the Gospel record if we come to it without the presupposition that certain phenomena must be eliminated from it. It can be said to Abbott's credit that he attempts to understand this narrative in the light of its background rather than through a psychological treatment of it. However, he, too, readily assumed that Mark originally contained a non-Messianic account to which he could return. Abbott's determination to extract the kernel from the husk instead of interpreting the Gospel record, on the supposition that it is seeking to communicate an intelligent and significant message, prevented him from properly evaluating the Graeco-Jewish background of the Gospels.

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<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., pp. 584-588.

The background material, such as that found in the Targums and Talmuds, which Abbott brought into his discussion was wrongly used in an endeavour to destroy rather than to interpret. Also in his exegesis he selected only part of the background material and did not take into account much material, which would have shed light on the interpretation of the Gospels. For instance, the Jewish eschatological background of the Synoptic account of Jesus' baptism militates against the supposition that the Gospels here contain an account unacceptable to first century Jews. Many eschatological passages describe the heavens as rent and a revelation coming from them.<sup>1</sup> This, together with the other evidence which throws light on the Synoptists meaning, helps to bring out the point that we must interpret their accounts of Jesus' baptism rather than destroy them.

Abbott had no place in his thinking for Jewish Apocalyptic. He conceived God as immanent and pantheistic. His God was closely parallel to the conception of deity presented by the Stoics; any apocalyptic entrance of God into the world could find no place in his thinking. As a result, he did not use Jewish apocalyptic to interpret the Gospels, and he erroneously read into the Gospels Stoic and Pantheistic ideas. He failed both to find his original Gospel and to arrive at the understanding of our Gospel texts that their Graeco-Jewish background will yield with patient study, unaccompanied by the bias that the supernatural is legend.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, op. cit., p. 160.

## CHAPTER VI

### SON OF MAN

We have seen that Abbott made an effort to find in the New Testament itself a text that corroborated the theological outlook that grew out of his philosophy. In this chapter we shall see that he interpreted the phrase 'Son of Man' so as to make it substantiate his views concerning Jesus, man and God.

As we have already pointed out, he believed that Jesus was the Son of Mary and Joseph.<sup>1</sup> However, he combined this with the belief that the generation of Jesus was divine. He declared,

That Word of God which in various degrees inspires every righteous human soul (none can say how soon in its existence) did not inspire Jesus, but was (to speak in metaphor) totally present in Jesus from the first so as to exclude all imperfection of humanity. Human unrighteousness - such as we are in the habit of attributing to human generations there was in this case, none.<sup>2</sup>

This is what he means when he says Jesus' birth was divine. This is the truth in the illusion of the Miraculous Conception; and it is important that the husk be removed from this kernel of truth because the Miraculous Conception, as it is usually understood, tends ". . . to separate Jesus from common humanity and from human love and sympathy."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 267. That Jesus was not the son of Joseph is called an "untruth." (Ibid., p. 279.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 280. For a criticism of this position see Chapter III.

In an effort to overcome such separation, Abbott found in the title 'Son of Man' evidence of what he calls the Humanity of God and the divinity of man. For Jesus the fundamental meaning of the title 'Son of Man' seems to have been that He, "though knowing Himself to be akin to the Humanity of God in heaven from whence He heard Himself hailed as Son of God, preferred to dwell on the thought that He was akin to the divinity of man on earth."<sup>1</sup> This interpretation which finds in the title 'Son of Man' a substantiation of the divinity of man furnished Abbott a Christology which he believed might win to Christianity all those who advocated the belief in a religion of humanity. Ben Zoma had said, "Them that glorify man made in the image of God, God will glorify as though they had glorified Him."<sup>2</sup> This comment on I Samuel ii.30 was taken by Abbott to be "a far-reaching interpretation . . . which would harmonize the worship of Jehovah with a religion of humanity." He added, "A similar thought is at the bottom of the identification of the terms 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God'."<sup>3</sup>

The term 'Humanity of God' for Abbott "implies a faith in the spiritual truth of Ezekiel's vision of the 'appearance as of a man' on the throne in heaven, really corresponding to 'the son of man' on earth."<sup>4</sup> Jesus as the Son and Revealer of the "eternal Humanity of the Father and of the Son in the Spirit . . . chose for Himself, above all other titles, that of 'the son of man' to denote

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<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>FLTS, op. cit., p. 278.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 534, f.n. 2.

the character in which He served on earth."<sup>1</sup> With these ideas in mind Abbott referred to ". . . Christ's religion of humanity, based on the fatherhood and sonship, which the Law, as interpreted by the Pharisees, was tending to smother under various kinds of artificialities, typified by Cerban (Mark vii.11 compare Matthew xv.5)."<sup>2</sup>

In Christ's use of 'Son of Man' Abbott found Christ's religion of humanity which included the Humanity of God and the divinity of man. He discovered in Jesus' use of 'Son of Man' a Christian Positivism which included a belief in the Humanity of God instead of giving up belief in God, as contemporary Positivism did.<sup>3</sup> This appears to have furnished Abbott with a theology that was less materialistic than that given in The Kernel and the Husk where he thought of the Spirit of God as the power which holds matter together.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on Christ's statement, "Father . . . thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii.24), Abbott wrote, "The 'love' here spoken of is human love - not impersonal attraction but the human love of the eternal Humanity of the Father and of the Son in the Spirit."<sup>5</sup> Jesus as Revealer of this Humanity chose the title 'Son of Man'. If we followed out Abbott's reasoning, it would appear that, for Jesus, God's love was not impersonal attraction. It might seem that Abbott took a step away from the Pantheism which pervades his thought. However, there is no retraction to this effect; and, as we pointed out,<sup>6</sup> Abbott earlier

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 563.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 247. (This is a continuation of f.n. 2 on p. 246.)

<sup>3</sup>For Abbott's via media position in regard to Positivism and Christianity see Chapter II.

<sup>4</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>5</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 563.

<sup>6</sup>See Chapter II.

in his thought maintained a belief in a personal God along with his Pantheism.

His conclusion about 'Son of Man' was that

Jesus saw what the greatest of the ancient prophets saw, only more amply, clearly, and continuously. Ezekiel now and then had glimpses - and, in an inferior sphere, the writer whom we call Daniel had an imitative glimpse - of One like a man, or son of man, near the throne in heaven; Jesus had a perpetual vision of such a son of man in heaven corresponding to another son of man on earth - another, yet the same in God's intention - struggling upwards through imperfection and corruption to the 'glory above the heavens'.<sup>1</sup>

The points on which Abbott based his conclusion were: (a) that Jesus used the term Bar Adam which was translated 'Son of Man';<sup>2</sup> (b) that the term 'Son of Man' as used by Ezekiel was used by Jesus, and Jesus' meaning is found in Ezekiel.<sup>3</sup>

On the first point he observed that the Aramaic Targum of Jonathan on Ezekiel takes the Hebrew, ben Adam, not as 'son of adam (i.e. man)' but as 'son of Adam (i.e. the Patriarch)' and calls Ezekiel 'Bar Adam'.<sup>4</sup> Jesus may have used bar Adam with a reference to this appellation of Ezekiel.<sup>5</sup> Although bar nash in some of its forms might lay stress on the humanity of Christ, bar Adam might do so more forcibly. The latter term might, "suggest 'one who calls himself not bar David, but bar Adam, because he aims at building up, not the House of David alone, but the House of fallen Adam, the whole of mankind.'" Also, "it might convey the thought of the likeness of

<sup>1</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, The Message of the Son of Man, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 112f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 16.



the Son of Adam to Adam, and, through Adam, to God, Adam's archetype."<sup>1</sup>  
 Abbott's contention, therefore, was that "Jesus called Himself Son of Adam, and that He had in view the fact that Ezekiel was similarly called, after he had seen a vision of one like a Man above the throne in heaven."<sup>2</sup>

The title 'bar Adam' does not go back to Ezekiel but to the Targum on Ezekiel. Abbott does not have convincing Old Testament documentary evidence for his hypothesis on this point and philologically Bar nasha is "the Aramaic Expression behind the Greek ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου."<sup>3</sup>

Present day scholarship, on the whole, does not follow Abbott here. W. A. Curtis has presented an argument for 'ben-Adam' as the original behind Jesus' 'Son of Man';<sup>4</sup> and G. S. Duncan has suggested that bar Adam, as found in the Targum of Ezekiel and of Daniel viii.17, "may conceivably have been the form used by Jesus."<sup>5</sup> However, today, "it may be regarded as extremely probable, if not absolutely certain, that ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in the Gospels is nothing but a slavish rendering of an original Aramaic bar Nāshā . . ."<sup>6</sup> The Aramaic phrase bar nash occurs only in the Old Testament in Daniel vii.13.<sup>7</sup> It does not appear, however, that one would be justified in discounting altogether the possibility that Jesus took this title directly from Daniel, or as this title in Daniel had been developed in His day, to indicate that He was the one who would be given the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup>W. A. Curtis, Jesus Christ the Teacher, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>G. S. Duncan, Jesus, Son of Man, p. 135, f.n. 4.

<sup>6</sup>T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>7</sup>J. Y. Campbell, "Son of Man", A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, Alan Richardson, ed., p. 230.

everlasting kingdom foretold in Daniel's vision.<sup>1</sup> In the elaboration of his position Abbott spiritualises the Son of Man's 'coming' (as in Mark viii.38).<sup>2</sup> At such places he forces his exegesis on Scripture in the interest of his own theory that Jesus called Himself, bar Adam, in allusion to Ezekiel. Abbott gives an interesting and informative chapter on the 'parallelisms between Ezekiel and Jesus',<sup>3</sup> but in his development of his thought he too readily dismisses the part that Jewish eschatology contributed to the meaning of Jesus' self-designation 'Son of Man'.

For Abbott, when Jesus used the title 'Son of Man', He had in mind 'man made in the image of God'.<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel in his vision of the appearance of a Man above revealed to one called 'Son of Man' below brought out the notion of a common element between God and man. This was considered significant because when we speak of God as Father, "we need to show that a human Father is meant - human, at least, in this sense, that He is capable of something corresponding to what we, human beings, call love and sympathy."<sup>5</sup> All of this can hardly be found in Ezekiel; Abbott has read meaning into the prophet's words. In Ezekiel 'Son of Man' "suggests at once the littleness of the prophet as man, and the greatness to which God calls him in his service; through him, man though he is, God speaks to man, and carries out his high purposes."<sup>6</sup> That the Aramaic phrase (or its Hebrew equivalent)

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 231

<sup>2</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 226f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-107.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Campbell, "Son of Man", op. cit., p. 231f.

used to express son of man in Ezekiel simply means 'man' or 'a son of man' "is beyond dispute".<sup>1</sup> Even if we maintain with Curtis that the title 'Son of Man' was given Ezekiel "as if his personal name on earth had been exchanged in heaven's use for a name which identified him as a man with humanity at large to whom through Israel his message was addressed,"<sup>2</sup> there is no real suggestion that in Ezekiel the divinity of man and the Humanity of God comes to the fore in the designation 'Son of Man'. Rather, it suggests the littleness of the prophet as man.

The main reason Abbott found the above meanings in 'Son of Man', as used by Jesus, is that he refused to allow Jewish apocalyptic writings any place in formulating its meaning. He opposed those who trace 'Son of Man' back to Daniel through the Similitudes of Enoch. He doubted that all portions of Enoch were pre-Christian in origin,<sup>3</sup> and he would not accept the possibility that Enoch and Ezekiel have essentially different doctrines about the Son of Man. He declares that the Similitudes of Enoch "follows in Ezekiel's and Daniel's steps . . ." and that the author in one portion of his narrative (Enoch xlii.1) "seems

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus, p. 122. In Daniel vii.13, 14 the Aramaic construction is the same as it would be for Ezekiel. In both works the article specifying the Son of Man is missing. However, in Daniel this term "acquires a sort of specialized (corporate) sense which it has nowhere else in pre-Christian literature." (Ibid., p. 124.) This sense distinguishes it from the term in Ezekiel. Even if 'Son of Man' was used generally, the development of it in Daniel distinguishes Daniel's meaning from Ezekiel's. Toward the end of this chapter we shall deal with the possibility that 'Son of Man' was used widely in pre-Christian times.

<sup>2</sup>Curtis, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Notes on New Testament Criticism, op. cit., p. 235.

to combine Ezekiel and Daniel . . . ."<sup>1</sup> He contends, somewhat at length, that Enoch does not recognise son of man as a title.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott found the background for Jesus' ideas of 'Son of Man' only in Ezekiel. He maintained that "Jesus, who protested against the supplanting of the Law by the traditions of the Pharisees, was not likely to avail himself largely of Enochian developments of Scripture even for the purpose of popular teaching."<sup>3</sup> His conclusion on 'Son of man' in II Esdras is that it was ". . . a version of Ezekiel's vision . . . ."<sup>4</sup> Abbott makes a resolute effort to equate the forms of son of man in Ezekiel and other literature and to deny its apocalyptic connotations in Enoch and II Esdras. The facts go against him here.

Some scholars today doubt that the Similitudes of Enoch are pre-Christian in date and that this work establishes that 'son of man' was a Messianic title before Jesus' coming.<sup>5</sup> Others maintain that 'Son of Man' was a recognised Messianic title in pre-Christian times.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 50f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51. Curtis similarly declared that the Deliverer is "introduced as one whose countenance had the appearance of a man, and only thereafter is referred to as 'that Son of Man' (I Enoch xlv.1-3) - clear evidence that it is no recognised popular title but an echo of Ezekiel and Daniel." (Curtis, op. cit., p. 135.)

<sup>3</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>R. H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, p. 98; C. H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures, op. cit., p. 116; C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, op. cit., p. 242f; J. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and meaning of the Term Son of Man", The Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. XLVIII, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Bowman, op. cit., p. 125 (He follows Goguel.); Dalman, The Words of Jesus, op. cit., p. 248f.; W. Manson, Jesus the Messiah, op. cit. p. 157; Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 189.

Cullmann asserts that the word, barnasha, in Jesus' time served as ". . . the title of a mediator who is to appear at the end of time."<sup>1</sup> Mowinckel declared that all the variant forms which occur in Judaism, including Daniel vii, "must be dependent on earlier conceptions, which were in circulation in some circles in later Judaism, and which Enoch presents directly, whereas Daniel gives a symbolic reinterpretation."<sup>2</sup> He added, "it is now generally agreed that the Apocalypse of Enoch is a Jewish book . . . nor is there any real division of opinion on the Jewish origins of the Similitudes."<sup>3</sup> In a footnote he declared, "Hilgenfeld's attempt to show that they are Christian . . . is for the most part abandoned, and has been decisively refuted."<sup>4</sup> However, whether we take the son of man figure in the Similitudes as an individualisation of the corporate figure symbolic of 'the saints of the most High' in Daniel vii<sup>5</sup> and hold that Jesus was largely dependent upon the eschatological systems such as are found in Enoch,<sup>6</sup> or dismiss Enochian influence holding that "the terms in which the Synoptic Jesus speaks of His exaltation and coming again recall the language of Daniel, but not at all that of Enoch,"<sup>7</sup> we are confronted in Jesus' 'Son of Man' sayings with phenomena that indicate He was

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, p. 353.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 354, f.n. 4.

<sup>5</sup>A. J. B. Higgins, ed., New Testament Essays, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>Otto, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>W. Manson, Jesus the Messiah, op. cit., p. 168.

alluding to Daniel when He spoke. Indeed, the pertinent observation has been made that "one objection to the Ezekiel hypothesis is that on the two occasions when Jesus refers explicitly to an Old Testament text (Mark xiii.26, para; xiv.62 para.), he recalls not Ezekiel, but Daniel vii.13.<sup>1</sup> The Danielic passage is "directly reflected" in Matthew xxvi.64.<sup>2</sup> 'Son of Man', as it was borrowed from Daniel and developed in meaning in the Similitudes of Enoch, came to signify

. . . a heavenly pre-existent Man, who is to sit on a "throne of glory" and to whom "the passages in the gospels echo this conception, and describe the Son of man as "sitting at the right hand of Power" and "coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark xiv.62, Luke xxii.69, Mark viii.38, xiii.26; Luke xviii.8, xxi.27 etc.), it seems best to connect the term "Son of man" with the Daniel passage.<sup>3</sup>

In fact,

. . . the Son of man is the glorified figure who is to come on the clouds of heaven and hold the Last Judgment in the following passages in Mark: 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21a, 21b, 41, 62. Mark 2:10, 28 are sometimes taken to mean "man".<sup>4</sup>

Since Abbott advocates tracing Jesus' sayings about 'Son of Man' back to Ezekiel, the burden of proof falls on him, especially in those passages which retain apparent reminiscences of Daniel vii.13. On one such passage (Matthew xxvi.64) he affirmed "all agree" that

<sup>1</sup>Fuller, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>MacGregor, The Gospel of John, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>W. Manson, The Gospel of Luke, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Frederick C. Grant, "Introduction" to St. Mark, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, p. 642.

'coming with the clouds of heaven' in Matthew xxvi.64 is from Daniel vii.13. He further declared, ". . . that Jesus should have adopted a prophecy of this kind can excite no surprise. It accords with the eighth Psalm and with Christ's doctrine of 'the authority of the son of man'."<sup>1</sup> This does not give an adequate account of the glory and power of this heavenly 'Son of Man' "seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven," (Matthew xxvi.64). These terms are combined together and applied to 'Son of Man' in Daniel vii. This suggests that Matthew xxvi.64 alludes to Daniel vii.

Abbott failed to give Daniel vii and Jewish eschatology in general the place they had in formulating the meaning of 'Son of Man' for Jesus. He dismisses any influence of Jewish eschatology upon Jesus' use of 'Son of Man'. Alfrad Loisy had maintained in opposition to Harnack that Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom had an eschatological aspect and could be understood only in the light of eschatology.<sup>2</sup> Abbott's kernel was spiritual whereas Harnack's was personal,<sup>3</sup> but both denied that eschatology contributed to the essence of Jesus' teaching. Also Schweitzer in Von Reimarus zu Wrede (1906) came out in favour of the view that 'Son of Man' ". . . in the passages where it is authentic, [is] a purely eschatological designation of the Messiah . . ."<sup>4</sup> In spite of the contemporary insistence that Jesus spoke in eschatological terms, Abbott consistently denied this

<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., pp. 284-285.

<sup>2</sup>A. Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, trans. Christopher Home, pp. 63-72.

<sup>3</sup>A. Harnack, What is Christianity, trans. T. B. Saunders, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, op. cit., p. 239.



possibility and attributed such "materialisings" to Jesus' "disciples".

At one place he declared,

We may . . . not improbably suppose that Enochian traditions led some of Christ's own disciples to materialise, misunderstand, and deteriorate His doctrine. But that Jesus Himself borrowed from such sources is a very different supposition, to be rejected as being proved by no facts and contrary to all probabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Even if Jesus did not borrow from Enoch, the materialisings to which Abbott refers are still to be found in Jesus' words as recorded in the Gospels. Abbott wrongly spiritualised them. To be sure, 'Son of Man' apparently means "man, i.e. man collectively or in the abstract" in some of Jesus' sayings. As Sanday stated,

There are places in the Gospels where we could almost substitute Humanity for the Son of Man; as conspicuously in that well-known passage, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath (St. Mark ii.28).<sup>2</sup>

However, 'Son of Man' here hardly contains reference to the deity of man and the Humanity of God in Abbott's sense of these concepts.<sup>3</sup>

Abbott gave 'Son of Man' too limited a background. It may be true that in the background of 'Son of Man', as it was used by Jesus, there was the influence of Jewish thought on Adam, the first or Original Man; but this should not be traced back primarily to bar Adam and the Targum on Ezekiel. It is possible that there is an underlying connexion between

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<sup>1</sup>TSOM, op. cit., p. 641.

<sup>2</sup>Sanday.

Adam and the heavenly, eschatological Son of Man Redeemer since both are referred to as 'man'. There is a record of "non-Jewish speculations about an 'original Man', divine prototype to Man," as Cullmann has shown.<sup>1</sup> He has found traces "of a divine Original Man, the ideal prototype of Man" in "the Iranian, Chaldean, and Egyptian religions; in the cult of Attis; among the Mandaeans and Manichaeans; and in Gnosticism in general."<sup>2</sup> There is a possibility that Jewish thought has taken over this idea and adopted it into its eschatology, adjusting it and elaborating it according to the Jewish doctrine of the first man, Adam. Daniel vii, IV Ezra, and Enoch "develope only the eschatological aspect, and only here and there take up isolated features of the other conceptions of the Original Man."<sup>3</sup> But there are traces of an "Adam literature" (Vita Adae and Slavic Enoch for example) which give a record of Jewish thought concerning the first man, Adam. This in no way denies or diminishes the eschatological colouring of the term 'Son of Man' as used by Jesus; this still stands. Abbott had sought to maintain that the title originally alluded to Adam, the Archetype of Man, and, therefore, to deny that it had any eschatological connotations. The development of this designation in Jewish apocalyptic and the connexion between this and Jesus' self-designation makes Abbott's position untenable. However, it may be that

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Mowinkel declared that the "Son of Man for the Jews was not merely an apotheosized man who has been taken up to heaven, like Enoch or Elijah, or who has become one with the deity in mystical cultic experiences, like the king-god of the ancient east. He has always belonged to the heavenly plane. He was pre-existent. In spite of this he is called 'the man' (the Son of Man), the typical man, the prototype of mankind. Thus he is a divine being in human form, a man with a divine nature." (Mowinkel, op. cit., p. 429.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

through this wider background there is a connexion between the Apostle Paul's Adam Christology and Jesus' 'Son of Man'. At least, the possibility of this is seen today; and we can no longer limit the background of this term primarily to the Targum on Ezekiel. On the matter of St. Paul's Adam Christology Abbott declared, ". . . the most reasonable conclusion seems to be" that Paul derived 'Second Adam'

. . . not from Ezekiel directly, but from Ezekiel indirectly, coming to him through Christian tradition (or through express revelation as in the case of the Eucharist) about the meaning of Christ's self-appellation 'Son of Man', probably in the form of 'Son of Adam' . . .<sup>1</sup>

We cannot trace Jesus' use of 'Son of Man' in the eschatological passages back to the one source of the Targum on Ezekiel, nor can we trace St. Paul's 'Second Adam' back to this one source. It is in the light of this 'son of man' literature that Ezekiel's designation 'Son of Man' must be viewed. Only as we take into account this widespread usage of 'Son of Man' are we able to arrive at the contribution Ezekiel's use of 'Son of Man' made to Jesus' use of it.

Abbott cannot make the Gospels yield the Christology that he worked out in his Natural Christianity. The Gospels were not written with his presuppositions. They do not endeavour to present the Christian Positivism Abbott sought. Their background furnished them ideas that center around 'Son of Man' that Abbott falsely assumed were a materialising of the spiritual thought that made up his kernel of the Gospel, and which he made an effort to put into the thought of Jesus. We have shown that there were ideas in 'Son of Man' on the lips of Jesus which Abbott's theories omit. It does seem "probable that the . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, The Message of the Son of Man, op. cit., p. 5.

understanding of the phrase, as a reference to the real humanity of our Lord, contains an essential element of truth; it was a fitting self-designation for him who was made in all points like unto his brethren, the sons of men, that he might make them sons of God." In His use of 'Son of Man' Jesus was not limited to the concepts that He found centered around the title in His day. Abbott was not warranted in finding his own peculiar ideas in the thought of Jesus.

## CHAPTER VII

### PARADOSIS

As we have seen, much of Abbott's work was centered upon the critical problems of the Gospels. However, in Son of Man he developed his doctrine of the person of Christ and in Paradosis his doctrine of the atoning work of Christ. We shall give an account of his doctrine of Paradosis and of its place in his theology and in theology contemporary with him. Then we shall criticise it and evaluate it.

We have found that the outline of Abbott's thought is presented in The Kernel and the Husk. His other works further work out what he says here. He gave the doctrine of natural redemption, that he was to develop in Paradosis, in The Kernel and the Husk. He declared that the parents or brother, sister or friend of an "ever-erring" youth ". . . are bearing his sin and carrying his iniquity as if it were their own."<sup>1</sup> He continued,

. . . their heart is broken and contrite for his sake;  
their souls are a sacrifice for his; they feel his sin  
as if it were their own; they have appropriated his sin;  
have been identified with his sin; they are "made sin"  
for him. . . . .

/. . . . .  
[The youth] finding himself trusted by these in  
whose truth as well as goodness he himself places trust,

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<sup>1</sup>K&H, op. cit., p. 302.

. . . learns a new self-respect even in the moment when he awakens to his past degradation; he has (he feels it to be true) something within him that may be trusted, some possibility of better things which at once springs up into the reality of fulfillment under the warm breath of affectionate and trustful forgiveness. In other words righteousness is "imputed to him", and he becomes righteous. The gulf between the parental will and himself is now bridged over by a kind of atonement.<sup>1</sup>

The 'imputation' and 'atonement' observed here are found in Christ's work. Abbott declared,

. . . every act of forgiveness, from Adam down to John the Baptist, has been inspired by the Word of God to be a type and prophecy of that great and unique act which sums up and explains all forgiveness, the Atonement made by the Word's own sacrifice . . . What the tear of a mother may be to her child, that the Cross of Christ has been to mankind; the expression as it were, of the Father's pitifulness for His sinful children, revealing to them the meaning, and the pain, of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, there was nothing in St. Paul's teachings about salvation that was against the laws of nature if we follow Abbott's exposition of St. Paul's theology.<sup>3</sup> Regarding St. Paul's theology Abbott commented:

His illustrations of it, arguments in defence of it, even his expressions of it, are, from our point of view, often inadequate; but his spiritual truths are the deepest of human nature, as it may be seen ascending through illusion and frailty to divine knowledge and divine righteousness.<sup>4</sup>

This interest in Natural Christianity together with his method of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-303.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

critical exagesis were used by Abbott in his study of the Atonement. In Paradosis he defends the belief that the doctrine of natural redemption found in The Kernel and the Husk was the doctrine of the Atonement in the Original Gospel.

The sub-title he gave to Paradosis was "or 'in the night in which He was (?) Betrayed.'" He used paradosis to correspond to the verb 'deliver (up)',<sup>1</sup> and he contended that the words, "in the night in which he was betrayed",<sup>2</sup> should be changed to "in the night in which he was delivered up [ ] by the Father as a sacrifice for sinners [ ]."<sup>3</sup> The latter is what Jesus meant when He spoke of paradosis.<sup>4</sup> Underlying the thinking of Christ and the New Testament writers when they mentioned paradosis was the prophecy of Isaiah which meant in Hebrew, "He shall make intercession for transgressors" (Isaiah liii.12) but which appeared in the LXX as "He was delivered up because of their transgressions." Our Lord had in view the former meaning when He spoke of being delivered up. He meant that His Passion was an intercessory sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

Abbott believes that he can show that paradosis should be taken to refer to the 'delivering up' of the Son by the Father in most of its valid New Testament occurrences. The Fourth Evangelist uses it six times in reference to Judas as a betrayer, but Jesus uses it only once in this sense in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>6</sup> However, Mark's

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 11, f.n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>1 Corinthians xi.23.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 48.



use of paradosis (Mark xiv.41-45), as an act of Judas, contains 'conflations'.<sup>1</sup> Luke's statement, "But Jesus said to him 'Judas, Art thou delivering up the Son of Man with a kiss?'" is declared unhistorical and the result of a misunderstanding.<sup>2</sup> Passages which connect Judas with paradosis are either corruptions of an original that connected God the Father with paradosis;<sup>3</sup> or they refer to Judas' act as of secondary significance as compared to the Father's Paradosis:<sup>4</sup> or they are other errors like those above. In Abbott's view we will gain by realising this doctrine of paradosis:

There is all the world of difference between the mind's eye of a seer fixed in a kind of second-sight on Judas, and the mind's eye of a Saviour and Son of God fixed on the inscrutable wisdom with which the Father over-rules sin and suffering so as to make them subservient to the redemption and perfection of man.<sup>5</sup>

In developing his argument he declared that whereas we say in English, "the Lord gave Himself for us," one would substitute in Hebrew 'His soul' for 'Himself'.<sup>6</sup> "In the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Ephesians, which declare that Christ 'gave himself' for us, Delitzsch and the Syriac both have 'gave his soul' for us."<sup>7</sup> "Where R. V. tells us that Elijah, or Jonah (I kings xix.4, Jonah iv.8) 'requested for himself' the Hebrew has 'his soul'.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, we should regard Jesus as having given up his soul for transgressors in an act of intercession.<sup>9</sup> The Fourth Evangelist speaks of 'flesh' ;

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-140.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 123, f.n. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

the Synoptic Gospels speak of 'body'. This indicates that our Lord used some peculiar Aramaic word such as 'soul' which "sometimes means 'body' as well as 'self'."<sup>1</sup> This word - the Hebrew and Aramaic soul -

. . . also includes the meaning of 'life-blood', so that it would be applicable either to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 'pouring out his soul unto death', or to the Messiah whose 'blood' is described by the Synoptists as 'poured out for many'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, far from being limited to paradosis in connexion with Judas, this doctrine of Abbott's is far reaching in its interpretation of Jesus' sacrifice. It is asserted that Christ taught the doctrine which Abbott defends here - that of "self-sacrifice, or losing the soul, or giving the soul as a ransom for others, or drawing out the soul to those in need of help."<sup>3</sup> This doctrine is "natural for noble minds". It was taught not only by Christ and Isaiah but also by Philo when he said, "Every wise man is a ransom for the bad one."<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that Abbott wished to secure this rather many-sided doctrine of paradosis since it would show that the Bible contains a doctrine of the Atonement which he could accept. It would bring Christ's view of His sacrifice in line with the thinking of noble minds in every age. It would make it an intercessory sacrifice of the soul. It would make the sacrifice of Christ obedient to the existing spiritual law that "Every wise man is a ransom for the bad one."<sup>5</sup> Abbott stresses the moral influence of Jesus' act of sacrificial

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

intercession in the delivering up of his soul. If we take Jesus' words, "This is my body," to be a corruption of "This is my soul, for you" we have a verbal connexion with Jesus' life and work as described by the Synoptists. As an outgrowth

. . . we are thrown back at once on His fundamental doctrine of the 'losing and finding' (or 'destroying and vivifying') the soul, which our Lord - on this hypothesis of the Original Aramaic - after preaching in word to His disciples, now exemplifies for them in act - leaving them as John says, an example, that they should 'do to one another' as he was now doing, or as Paul says, bidding them to do what He was doing 'in remembrance' of Him, that is to say, 'losing' the soul, or 'delivering it up' to death, in the service of men, the children of God, that thereby they might 'find' it again in God, the Father of men.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott stood with men such as McLeod Campbell who opposed the idea that Jesus' sacrifice was external, material and objective. Campbell was wrestling with the same problem that presented itself to Abbott - how to bring a Christian witness to a world in which belief in the reign of natural law leads into the error of giving up belief in a personal God.<sup>2</sup> Campbell believed that Christ made a confession of our sins that was followed by an intercession for sinners. Christ in His Atonement ". . . made His soul a fit offering for sin."<sup>3</sup> Campbell declared that "the Father's heart did demand the shedding of blood in order to the remission of sins . . ."<sup>4</sup> But 'blood', for Campbell, meant " . . . not so much the actual blood shed by Christ in suffering as . . . the response to the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>John McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, 6th edition, p. xxii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

Father which our Lord made throughout his life and which poured itself out in blood on the Cross."<sup>1</sup> In like manner Abbott maintained that Jesus offered up His soul or life. Campbell also spoke of the tears of a parent shed over the wayward child in terms very much like those we found in Abbott. While such grieving by God is not considered penal, it is taken to have the "power to work holiness in us."<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, Abbott declared that such suffering atones. Although Campbell and Abbott bring out an important truth at this point, they do not do justice to the sacrificial work of Christ as this is presented by the New Testament. It is obvious that Abbott held many views in common with Campbell on the Atonement and that together with Campbell and Horace Bushnell he brought an attack against making the Atonement penal and objective.

We find the same line of reasoning in Horace Bushnell as we do in Abbott. Bushnell stated in The Vicarious Sacrifice:

What we call the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is nothing strange as regards the principle of it, no superlative, unexampled, and therefore unintelligible grace. It only does and suffers, and comes into substitution for, just what any and all love will, according to its degree . . .<sup>3</sup>

For Abbott, too, the Atonement is Natural - the offering up of intercessory prayer for transgressors, the bearing of others' sins as a mother bears those of her son.

The doctrine of the Atonement was the concern of many in

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<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Paul, The Atonement and the Sacraments, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Horace Bushnell, The Vicarious Sacrifice, p. 327.

Abbott's time. J. S. Mill wrote, "It may be doubted . . . whether Christianity is really responsible for atonement and redemption, original sin and vicarious punishment . . ."<sup>1</sup> He continued,

. . . that the divine message, assuming it to be such, has been authenticated by credentials so insufficient that they fail to convince a large proportion of the strongest and most cultivated minds, and the tendency to disbelieve them appears to grow with the growth of scientific knowledge and critical discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

The 'science' of the day was calling for a restatement of the Atonement.

Abbott wrote at a time when older ideas on the Atonement were being discounted. P. T. Forsyth wrote,

We have outgrown the idea that God has to be reconciled. We see, as we never did before, how unscriptural that is. We know that the satisfaction made by Christ no less than the sacrifices of the old law, flowed from the grace of God, and did not go to procure it. . . . .

. . . . . We have outgrown the idea that Redemption cost the Father nothing, that He had only to receive the payment, or even the sacrifice the Son made.<sup>3</sup>

Along the same line Harnack laid it down as a fact that "there can be . . . no redemption for us which is consummated outside our spirit."<sup>4</sup>

In this atmosphere of change on thought about the Atonement Abbott came out with the interpretation found in The Kernel and the Husk. In Paradosis he attempted to show that the interpretation he gave to the Atonement, making this doctrine meaningful to him and

<sup>1</sup>J. S. Mill, "Utility of Religion", The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill, ed. Marshall Cohen, p. 518f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>P. T. Forsyth, The Atonement in Modern Thought, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>A. Harnack, The Atonement in Modern Thought, p. 114.

to his age, was the real doctrine of the New Testament before it was corrupted by accretions and misunderstandings. Paradosis follows the same line of thought as the rest of his works. Together, they make it clear that he attempted to find the doctrines which accorded with the science of his day in his Original Gospel.

Abbott did not make out a convincing case for his views of Jesus' offering for sin for the following reasons.

(1) Abbott's theory of an original Hebrew Gospel with its many conjectures is an essential part of his argument in Paradosis. In his contention that Jesus did not refer to the feast of the Passover when He mentioned a 'delivering up' in Matthew xxvi.1-2 (parallels Mark viii.37, xiv.1; Luke xxi.37 - xxii.1) he imagines that the Original had the Hebrew word Moâd which may mean 'feast' or 'season', but which is derived from a root that means 'appoint' making its meaning the 'appointed time'. Possibly, "If we could find the Hebrew of Mark's Gospel, it would reveal some precept such as 'Watch, after two days cometh the Appointed Time' instead of 'Watch, for it will be the Passover after two days.'"<sup>1</sup> The disciples who heard Him might have taken this a few days later as a reference to His Resurrection. Thirty or forty years after His Resurrection, Christians might have imagined that Jesus' Ascension was a more significant Moâd than His Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> He explained,

Thus it would come to pass, after the gradual decease of the first Apostles, that many Christians, reading at the end of our Lord's discourse on the Last Days the words, "After two days cometh the Appointed Time" would

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 104-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-105.

be increasingly perplexed by any interpretation that referred the term to Christ's Resurrection. "That, they would say, "was four days distant, not two. But the Passover was two days off. Perhaps the Passover was meant. And perhaps the words were a statement of fact by the Evangelists, not a prediction of our Lord." . . . On the whole, if Jesus really said, "After two days cometh the Moad" we could hardly be surprised that this was converted into a statement of some kind about the Passover.<sup>1</sup>

For our reasons against the hypothesis of such an Original Hebrew Gospel, see Chapter III. That such a statement as the above remained in existence over such a long period of time during which it was being proclaimed, not only in Judaea but also in the Greek-speaking world, appears impossible.

Although this example of how Abbott destroyed any connexion between paradosis and the Passover is not convincing, he returned to his Original Hebrew Gospel constantly in his doctrine of paradosis. In Mark x.33 Jesus tells the twelve, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles" (King James Version). The parallel Matthew has virtually the same wording as Mark. Luke deviates from the other two Synoptic Gospels omitting the fact that the chief priests and scribes shall condemn the Son of Man. Referring to the phrase, "the chief priests and the scribes", Abbott attempts to explain the origin of the Marcan reading thus:

. . . now these two titles are frequently combined to mean the Sanhedrin, and the latter is commonly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 105f.



called the 'House of Judgment' . . . . Hence by conflation, might possibly be obtained 'the chief priests and the scribes who will judge him'; and, as the Hebrew 'judge (mant)' often means 'judge unfavourably'; i.e. 'condemn', this might give rise to 'the chief priests and the scribes who will condemn him'; which Mark may have amplified by adding 'to death'.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott's ideas on paradosis are based upon the assumption that an Original Hebrew Gospel contained his doctrine of paradosis. The fact that Abbott's Original Gospel never existed makes it equally certain that his theories about Jesus' 'delivering' are untrue.

(2) His doctrine of paradosis is also based upon his theory of Johannine intervention.<sup>2</sup> In the chapter, "Abbott as Johannine Scholar", we showed that Johannine intervention is not a valid explanation of the relationship between John and the Synoptics.

(3) Closely associated with Johannine intervention is Abbott's assumption that all the New Testament references to paradosis can be assimilated to the Fourth Gospel. In the saying of Jesus that the Son of Man came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew xx.28, Mark x.45) where Luke may have taken 'ransom' to be 'your humble servant' (Luke xxii.27), John may have intervened to correct Luke.<sup>3</sup> Abbott's supposition was that John

. . . does not invent, but merely brings out into definite form an obscured historical fact, when he represents Jesus as not only taking into Himself, under a symbol, the sins and impurities of the disciples,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

but also enjoining on them the duty of performing the same service for others, "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet."<sup>1</sup>

He concluded,

Whatever may have been the actual details - never perhaps now recoverable - evidence, both textual and antecedent, indicates that the Fourth Gospel, as regards the special subject of Christ's last words on 'ransoming' and 'ministering', goes closer to the mark than the Three, though it mentions neither 'minister' nor 'ransom' but only strives to give the spirit of the letter.<sup>2</sup>

The assimilation of the Synoptics to John served Abbott's purpose of dismissing the idea of Jesus' death as a sacrifice from the Gospels.

In John there are passages that allude to sacrifice such as the grain of wheat that dies and the paschal lamb. Vincent Taylor has observed, that while such allusions are significant

. . . they do not permit us to say that the obedience of Jesus is presented as the One great Sacrifice. No use is made of analogies in the sin-offering and the covenant-sacrifices as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there is no reference to an offering which man may make as the vehicle of his approach to God. All that we can say is that such materials out of which this conception can be formulated are present in the Gospel, but still unshaped and awaiting the builder's hand.<sup>3</sup>

However, Abbott finds the 'spirit' instead of the 'letter' in John without taking into account the *ἑλασμός* of I John 11.2. Since Abbott at places included the Johannine Epistles in his theory of Johannine intervention, he was presented with the problem of explaining the sacrificial terms of I John. C. H. Dodd has concluded

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Atonement in the New Testament, p. 149.

that the use of ἱλασμός in I John 11.2 indicates that "Christ is a 'sin-offering', a divinely supplied means of canceling guilt and purifying the sinner."<sup>1</sup> The writings of John then contain doctrine more closely akin to that found in Mark x.45 than Abbott's treatment leads us to imagine. Nor can we take Jesus' washing of the disciples feet as a legitimate replacement of the 'ransom' of Mark. In a comment on Mark x.45 and xiv.24, Taylor said, "Whatever explanation of the death of Jesus we may give to-day, there can be no doubt at all that Jesus Himself understood its meaning in terms of sacrifice."<sup>2</sup>

These different aspects of the Atonement found in the four Gospels warn us of the danger inherent in any effort to harmonize their doctrines and make them Johannine. There are "serious limitations in the Johannine theology . . ."<sup>3</sup> The Fourth Evangelist "never represents Christ as dying for sinners, as bearing their sins, falling under their curse, offering Himself in sacrifice on their behalf, inviting them to trust in His redemptive ministry and share in the power of his redemptive self-offering."<sup>4</sup> The clear inference from these facts is that a doctrine of the Atonement is one-sided and incomplete if it does not include the doctrine of all the New Testament writings. With the doctrine of the Atonement in mind Taylor wrote,

. . . we cannot afford to limit our attention to the

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greek, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Thought, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

message of any one Gospel, Epistle, or group of Epistles, since they are all organic members in a living body of truth wherein each has a function but is not the whole body.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott attempted to bring the Synoptic Gospels in line with the message which he derived from the Fourth Gospel. This made his doctrine of the Atonement too narrow and limited.

(4) Abbott also theorized that there were Greek corruptions behind the texts that mention a 'delivering up' (Mark x.32-4; Matthew xx. 17-19; and Luke xviii.31-34). Luke omits 'going up' except in the words of Jesus. Abbott believes this points to Greek corruption which was made in an attempt to explain that 'we are going up' meant 'purposing to go up'. The text of the Gospels was altered by numerous errors such as a marginal reading where  $\mu\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega\nu$  might have been written  $\mu\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega\nu$  by "illiterate writers - which many early Christian scribes and evangelists would probably be . . ."<sup>2</sup> This, together with later 'emendation' and 'conflation', produced the tradition that Jesus and the disciples were going up to Jerusalem. It is by such free handling of our Gospel texts, including many unproveable conjectures, that Abbott made out his case. This method weakens his argument for his views of paradosis.

(5) Abbott failed to give convincing proof that wherever 'delivering up' occurs in the writing of Paul, God, not Judas, is the One who delivers up. In Romans iv.25 Paul describes Christ as the one "who was delivered up on account of our trespasses and was raised on

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 72.

account of our justification."<sup>1</sup> Abbott noted that the Apostle is quoting from the "LXX version of Isaiah's description of the Suffering Servant" which states that the Servant's soul was delivered up unto death. The inference he drew from this one passage is ". . . that the Apostle in every instance uses the word [paradosis] concerning God or Christ as the agent, and never concerning Judas."<sup>2</sup> As Denney pointed out, "παρεσόν is used in LXX, Is. liii.12, and its New Testament use, whether God or Christ be the subject of the παρασδοσις (Rom. viii.32, Gal. ii.20, Eph. v.2), may be derived thence."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this does not authorize Abbott's statement that I Corinthians xi.23 means ". . . in the night in which he was delivered up . . ." (not betrayed) with the inference that God is the one who 'delivered up'.

Unless we deny that Judas betrayed Jesus (the evidence makes it impossible to take this view) and unless we are concerned to connect God with all occurrences of 'delivering up' in the interest of some doctrine such as Abbott's, there is nothing to prevent us from accepting the reading 'betrayed' for παρεδίδο in I Corinthians xi.23. Mark records a saying of Jesus "ἵδοὺ ὁ παρασδοὺς με ἤγγικεν." (Mark xiv.42). Mark xiv.43 makes it clear that Jesus had Judas in mind. This together with other sayings of Jesus, such as Luke xxii.48, indicate that I Corinthians xi.23 alludes to the 'delivering up' of Jesus by Judas. The appearance

<sup>1</sup>This is Abbott's translation. See Paradosis, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>James Denney, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, p. 621.

of 'night' in I Corinthians xi.23 may indicate that the act of Judas is intended. The 'delivering up' of Christ upon the cross occurred the day after Judas' 'delivering up'.<sup>1</sup>

Abbott would have to prove the Gospel passages erroneous which record Judas as betraying Christ in order to show that Judas should not be considered as the one who 'delivered up' Jesus in I Corinthians xi.23. He made an effort to show that in several Gospel passages Judas was not the one who 'delivered up' Jesus on the night of His arrest. At one place Abbott uses his Hebrew Gospel theory in an attempt to rewrite the verses that mention Judas as the betrayer at the table. In a discussion of Mark xiv.18-21; Matthew xxvi.21; and Luke xxii.21-23 Abbott finds in Mark "that most conflative of Evangelist" four phrases used to define the traitor - "(1) one of you (2) he that is eating with me (3) one of the Twelve (4) he that is dipping with me in the one [dish]." Luke omitted all of these and substituted "the hand is with me at the table." Abbott is led to ask, "Do not the facts suggest that Mark is trying to express in several phrases some Hebrew or Aramaic idiom denoting that the person delivering up

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<sup>1</sup>On I Corinthians xi.23 C. G. Findlay wrote, "The allusion to 'the night in which He was betrayed (graphic impf., 'while the betrayal went on'), is no mere note of time; it throws into relief the fidelity of Jesus in the covenant . . . thus made with His people, and enhances the holy pathos of the recollection . . . ." (C. G. Findlay, "First Corinthians", The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 880.)

Jesus was in the most intimate intercourse with Him . . .?"<sup>1</sup> Through numerous errors, such as a gloss and an ambiguous phrase that was misunderstood, our Gospel texts departed from the Original. Abbott commented:

These considerations suggest the conclusion that the tradition about "the hand", peculiar to Luke, is to be interpreted in connexion with its context as follows "The hand of the Father who is delivering me up for the sons of men is with me at this table of the new covenant, strengthening me for the sacrifice." The departure of the Son of man is ordained by God - yet woe unto him through whom he is to be delivered up.<sup>2</sup>

Here Abbott substitutes his message for that of the Gospels. He does not give convincing reasons why Judas is not the one at the table who will 'deliver up' Jesus. We conclude, therefore, that Abbott failed to show that God, not Judas, is intended by Paul as the one who 'delivered up' Christ in I Corinthians xi.23.

(6) Although Abbott finds allusions to Isaiah liii in the New Testament passages where 'delivering up' is found, he does not do justice to the idea of suffering found there. The same is true of words such as 'blood', 'covenant', and 'atonement' which are associated with *paradosis* in the New Testament. Such terms ". . . are all related to sacrificial conceptions, and need to be examined against the background of Old Testament religion and worship."<sup>3</sup> In Jesus' saying, 'my blood of the covenant' (Mark xiv.24), "He was

<sup>1</sup>Abbott, *Paradosis*, op. cit., pp. 135-137.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>V. Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, op. cit., p. 49.



clearly thinking of a covenant relationship between God and men established by His death."<sup>1</sup> Abbott's dismissal of ideas of a materialistic blood sacrifice connected with a covenant from Jesus' sayings presents an erroneous picture of Jesus' Atonement. Taylor declared,

In view of the sacrificial significance of the words concerning His 'blood of the covenant' (Mark xiv.24), and His unique conception of Messianic Sonship, it is reasonable to believe that He interpreted His death, or, to speak more exactly, His surrendered life, as a sacrificial offering in the power of which men might participate by personal self-committal to Himself, by fellowship in the Supper which He appointed, and by sacrificial service in daily life (Cf. Matt. viii.34, x.39).<sup>2</sup>

Abbott discusses the words of Jesus, "This is my body" (Matthew xxvi.26; Mark xiv.22; and Luke xxii.19). Luke adds, ". . . which is given for you." Abbott imagines that ". . . our Lord, in giving the bread, used the Aramaic phrase, 'Behold for you', meaning 'See, I give you' . . ."<sup>3</sup> Instead of 'body' the Hebrew may have been 'soul'.<sup>4</sup> From this point his conclusion might be easily imagined before we come to it. We are not surprised when we read that

. . . owing to the close connexion of Nephesh and "life-blood" the words "This is my soul for you" would suggest the giving of His life-blood for the forgiveness of the sins of the disciples, especially to those who went back from the Targum, "delivered up his soul," to Isaiah's Hebrew, "poured out his soul."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>V. Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

The Old Testament background for the 'new covenant' made with 'blood' was found by Abbott in the covenant with "all mankind, typified by Noah." He believed ". . . that possibly the New Covenant may contain a kind of spiritual reversal of the material enactment in that earliest of all Covenants."<sup>1</sup> We are not told why we have such a 'spiritual reversal' leading us to draw the conclusion that the reason lay in Abbott's mind, not Jesus'. Thus, Abbott unduly limits the significance of blood in Old Testament sacrifices and the importance that Jesus attached to the sacrificial system in His thinking.<sup>2</sup> In Mark xiv.24, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many," Taylor asserted, ". . . the sacrificial interpretation is inescapable." He continued,

The term "blood" does not simply indicate a violent death; its association with the idea of a "covenant" in all the variant forms in which this saying appears fixes its meaning as blood poured out in sacrifice, and this interpretation is confirmed by the words "which is shed for many".<sup>3</sup>

By needlessly 'spiritualising' Jesus' sacrifice, Abbott gave a false impression of the Old Testament background for the new covenant and of Jesus' own doctrine of sacrifice.

There are other weaknesses in Abbott's argument. His 'triple tradition' theory is maintained throughout Paradosis. Mark is taken

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The facts of Jesus' life show that He did not repudiate the sacrificial system. (Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 63.) Taylor made the conclusion ". . . that while perceiving the limitations of sacrificial worship, Jesus was no less conscious of its abiding religious value." (Ibid., p. 74.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

as ". . . a narrative based on notes - conflated or elaborated in picturesque detail - of a few isolated, popular, and striking actions, or descriptions, that never aimed at completeness and never attained accuracy."<sup>1</sup> We have already shown that Mark's source material was much more complete and reliable than Abbott suggests. We must entirely discount Abbott's theory that Mark's narrative was developed from notes containing only the triply attested works of the Synoptics.<sup>2</sup>

Nor, does Abbott give enough importance to the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man in his doctrine of Atonement. It was his opinion that,

There is nothing contrary to history and historical development in the belief that Christ taught this doctrine of self-sacrifice, or losing the soul, or giving the soul as a ransom for others, or drawing out the soul to those in need of help. . . . .

. . . . .  
The difficulty consists, not in confessing that the doctrine is natural for noble minds, but in feeling that the practice of it, and the power of helping others to practice it, are the highest attributes of divinity.<sup>3</sup>

This says too little about the sin problem of 'noble minds' and too little about God's holiness. It is no surprise to find that the index to Paradosis does not contain a reference to Hebrews ix.22, "and almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (King James Version). Abbott passes too lightly over men's sins and the objective 'expiation'

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter III.

<sup>3</sup>Abbott, Paradosis, op. cit., p. 6f.

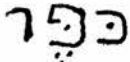
of sin. Some words of Donald Baillie give importance to the 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects of Atonement and furnish a corrective for Abbott. Dr. Baillie wrote,

What, then, is the divine Atonement . . . Is it 'objective' reality, something done by Christ, something ordained and accepted by God, in 'expiation' of human sin, quite apart from our knowledge of it and its effect upon us? Or is it a 'subjective' process, a reconciling of us to God through a persuasion in our hearts that there is no obstacle, a realizing of His eternal love? Surely, these two aspects cannot be separated at all, though the attempt has often been made to classify Atonement - theories in that way. In theological argument on this subject we are apt to forget that we are dealing with a realm of personal relationships and nothing else. If we use the terminology of an ancient sacrificial system, we should remember that in the last analysis the only offering we can make to God is the offering of ourselves in faith and love. What Jesus offered to God was Himself. But to offer oneself thus to God means at the same time to love men without limit, and so to carry the load of their sins. That is what Jesus did, in a passion which included physical suffering, social persecution and obloquy, even to the point of a shameful death, and above all the spiritual agony of seeing other lives go wrong. But if on the deepest interpretation, this was not only an offering made by a man to God, but also a sacrifice made by God Himself, then it is part of the sacrifice that God is continually making, because He is infinite Love confronted with human sin. And it is an expiatory sacrifice, because sin is a dreadfully real thing which love cannot tolerate or lightly pass over, and it is only out of the suffering of such inexorable love that true forgiveness, as distinct from an indulgent amnesty, could ever come. That is the objective process of atonement that goes on in the very life of God.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have a doctrine of the Atonement that includes Christ's "physical suffering", "shameful death", and the "expiatory sacrifice" together with the recognition that "sin is a dreadfully real thing

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Baillie, God Was in Christ, pp. 197, 198.

which love cannot tolerate or lightly pass over." All of these points must be brought out in a New Testament doctrine of the Atonement. Only as we do will we come near the meaning of the Old Testament term  and its derivatives in the LXX and the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It is only as this is done that the subjective aspect of the Atonement can be assigned its proper place and significance. Of course, we must rightly understand in what sense Christ's self-offering is a sacrificial offering. On this point Taylor observed,

Only if we thin' of sacrifice as a means of appeasing God is the conception out of place. As a means by which men may approach God and find reconciliation with Him the idea of a sacrificial offering is in harmony with the highest conception of the love and holiness of God in the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood.<sup>2</sup>

Abbott rightly guards against ideas of an Atonement that presents Jesus' sacrifice as a 'substitute' for sin which redeems the sinner by an act external to him. But in so doing he fails to retain the aspect of the Atonement which takes Jesus' death as an expiation. Regarding the important place this has in the Atonement, C. R. North stated,

To-day it is generally agreed that the idea of substitution, even if it is present at all in Old Testament sacrifice, is by no means prominent, so that a recognition of the relevance of sacrifice to the gospel of the Cross need not commit us to any acceptance of crude theories of substitution. There is also greater readiness than there was

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C. H. Dodd in a study of this word stated, "Christ is a 'sin-offering, a divinely supplied means of cancelling guilt and purifying the sinner.'" (C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, op. cit., p. 95.)  
 Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice, op. cit., p. 304f.

[earlier in this century] to study the sacrificial system sympathetically, as something that embodied ideas and aspirations which are of permanent value for religion. Moreover, it is coming to be realized that what the New Testament says about the Cross cannot be interpreted without violence to its plain meaning, if we read it without reference to ideas about sacrifice . . .<sup>1</sup>

This trend rightly goes against Abbott's dismissal of the sacrificial aspect of Jesus' Death.

There is an element of truth in Abbott's contention that God the Father 'delivered up' the Son. As we have seen, there are Scripture passages that contain this truth. However, in his presentation he wrongly denied historicity to many texts that declared Jesus was betrayed by Judas. As we have seen throughout his works, Abbott freely handled the New Testament in an effort to find his presuppositions in the New Testament itself. He used his unsound hypotheses (such as an Original Hebrew Gospel) in this work. Here, as well as in his work as a whole, he extensively misinterpreted the New Testament in an effort to harmonize its message and make that message accord with his presuppositions.

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. North, "Sacrifice", A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. Alan Richardson, p. 213.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

First we shall give a summary of the conclusion reached in the previous chapters. We shall then show how both the past estimates of Abbott and the advancements in theological studies support our conclusions. A short comment about the place Abbott occupies in the history of Christian thought will be followed by our concluding remarks.

We have seen that Abbott took a via media position between the philosophies of his time and orthodox Christianity. He attempted to Christianise the existing philosophies and to extract elements from orthodoxy which were not in line with the teachings of his philosophy. Although he doubted that men were capable of dealing with metaphysical problems, he refused to give up metaphysical speculation. He surrendered belief in miracles and took it as proven that God would not break the order of natural law. But he insisted that there is a non-supernatural kernel, or Original Gospel contained in the canonical Gospels, which he considered sufficient for his needs. Such reasoning opened the way for inconsistencies such as those that are implied in 'quasi-panteism'. He also maintained an eclecticism that contained both Pragmatism and Idealism. This via media position had a direct effect upon his doctrine of God. He conceived of God as the Power called attraction in the material world and Love in the immaterial world. Such a doctrine is not likely to satisfy either a materialist or a Christian. Although the contradictions in his thought make it probable that it would not serve



one's intellectual needs for long, the task Abbott chose of effecting a rapprochement between contemporary thought and Christian doctrine was an important one.

In keeping with his philosophy Abbott was a member of the liberal party, or the Broad Church School. He thought of himself as a member of the Party of Growth. As he understood it, growth required "destruction and partial conservation."<sup>1</sup> His party position was via media - between destruction and conservation.

It is obvious that Abbott was greatly influenced by the science of the nineteenth century. Besides those scientific views expressed throughout many of his writings, he published several books on Francis Bacon. In these it is evident that he embraced much of Bacon's thought and that he followed its spirit in the struggle against what he took to be the scholasticism of his time. Bacon helped him to formulate his thought and to enunciate his philosophy. However, the science he followed was essentially that of the nineteenth century. At the same time, we cannot place him in any nineteenth century school of philosophy. His aim was not to adopt a certain school of thought as his own. Rather it was to mediate between the different schools of thought - Idealism, Pragmatism, Positivism, Naturalism - and Christianity. He was a Christian Apologist. But he did not defend Christianity by staying in the fort and holding it against all attackers. Instead he took the fight out beyond the fort and attacked the opposition on its own ground. To drop the metaphor, he advocated such beliefs as Christian Positivism and 'quasi-panteism'. This line of thought is carried throughout his works and it leads him

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<sup>1</sup>Abbott, Oxford Sermons, op. cit., p. viii.

into the error of yielding too much to the current culture in an effort to win others to his minimum Christianity. The Gospel he offered them was the kernel of the canonical Gospels. In it the Virgin Birth was discounted, together with all other miracles except those performed (as Abbott would have it) by natural means. This was an apology by concession. We have maintained that Abbott's thought was probably too sceptical for most Christians and too Christian for most sceptics. While it may have been helpful to thoughtful people in his time, its inconsistencies were so numerous that it could not have served men for long. Abbott did not gain any great following and this goes a long way toward establishing our conclusion.

To the subject of Biblical criticism Abbott brought the presuppositions of his 'eclectic' philosophy and a method that was very experimental. He used a combination of several hypotheses in an endeavour to show that the Synoptic Gospels contain many legends, accretions, conflation, mistranslations, and other additions. All of these were added to an Original Gospel, written first in Hebrew and later rendered into Greek by various hands. These translations, containing the additions just mentioned, make up our canonical Gospels.

In giving his hypothesis of the process through which our Gospels evolved, Abbott went behind the phenomena of our four canonical Gospels present and attempted to delineate the history of the transmission of the oral gospel, including an account of how it received its final form before it was passed down to us. In his reconstruction of this period he anticipated some of the points that were to find expression in the form-critics of a succeeding generation. He maintained that the gospel tradition was shaped by oral transmission over a long period before it was written

down. At many points concerning early Christian worship and debate in which the tradition was altered and given its final shape, he anticipated many of the views of later critics. Also, he found illustrations of the process of oral transmission of the gospel tradition in the accounts of the life, death, and miracles of St. Thomas of Canterbury. He does not sufficiently recognise the differences between the accounts of the miracles of St. Thomas and of the Gospel miracles, nevertheless this part of his work should have a significant place in that development in Biblical studies which stresses the importance of the human element in the Bible and which extends in modern times from J. G. Herder through the form-critics of to-day.

It was Abbott's hypothesis that the gospel tradition circulated orally for many years. Later it was written down in Biblical Hebrew before it was translated into Greek. During this process the Original Gospel, which did not contradict Abbott's philosophy at any point, was changed into our canonical Gospels. Those who were instrumental in altering the tradition were the illiterate and uneducated members of the early churches. Abbott gives neither enough place to apostolic influence in our Gospels nor to other factors such as the testimony of eyewitnesses and the oriental memory. These factors give our Gospels a higher degree of reliable testimony, as well as a larger amount of trust-worthy material than Abbott's theories suggest. These points may be readily admitted by those who do not have Abbott's presuppositions, or some similar presuppositions, against accounts of super-natural events.

Furthermore, Abbott not only arrived at an original non-miraculous kernel through his criticism, he also spiritualised the gospel records in his fourfold gospel. The Fourth Gospel, which was taken primarily

as an account of allegories and visions, played an important part in his criticism at this point. Through his study he was led to give up the hope of finding a reliable history of Jesus' life. He was content, rather, to rest in the assumption that the Gospels, properly understood, give a true history of the spiritual experience of the early Christians. Here Abbott closely followed such allegorists as Origen and Clement of Alexandria. He wrongly assumed that John is only a record of mystical experience, and he failed to do justice to the Fourth Evangelist's specific historical details. John is interpreted as a record of historical religious experiences of the Spirit working in the church. Such a criticism enabled Abbott to treat the Gospels subjectively and to find in them a message that was acceptable to those swayed by the modern philosophies. In this criticism of John he gave too little place to apostolic influence behind the Gospel, and, in all probability, he assigned John too late a date.

In the Greek and Jewish thought that furnished the background to our Gospels Abbott found material that he used to arrive at theories of how miraculous accounts were added to a non-miraculous narrative. He believed that both Greek and Jewish ideas on miracles had been imposed upon the gospel record, thus altering an original non-miraculous text. He discounted these miraculous alterations as additions made by the early church.

He wrongly dismissed eschatological thought as an accretion to the text and he falsely assumed that the Hellenists had added many miracles to the tradition which can be discarded - if we only recognise that they are Hellenistic in origin. At the same time he found the doctrines of Stoicism in the Gospels, especially the Fourth; and he erroneously

attempted to make a syncretism of Stoicism, the Fourth Gospel, and his own thought. At places he calls upon the knowledge derived from the background to the Gospels to interpret them; but more often his purpose was to destroy rather than interpret the canonical message.

In the last two chapters of this thesis we found that Abbott gave a Christology and a doctrine of the Atonement that were in line with Natural Christianity. The positive contribution he made toward the removal of the scholasticisms in the doctrine of the Atonement was minimised by the errors he made in denying historicity to many New Testament passages that speak of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. He erred in assuming that the original tradition spoke of God as the one who 'delivered up' Jesus in almost all the passages where Judas is mentioned as the 'betrayed'. His Son of Man, while a monumental and suggestive work, is limited in its importance by the presuppositions that controlled his thought in it. The positive contribution that these doctrinal works made was limited by the defects we have mentioned.

We have found errors and inadequacies throughout Abbott's works. We have shown that his works on the Bible were carried out under the assumption that all accounts of miracles were unhistorical. This was a result of the false assumption that God would not break the natural order that He had established. We have denied that this argument against the miracles of the Gospels is valid. We have shown that in his criticism and exegesis he errs in finding his own non-miraculous tradition and his own doctrines in the gospel record. Although he may have helped to guide people back to Christianity from the sceptical philosophy of his day, he does not furnish a system that would satisfy the human heart and mind for long.

Our conclusions are supported by the estimates of Abbott made by his contemporaries. It is a matter of record that his works as a whole were not generally accepted. Nor did the church approve his theology. One observer wrote that Abbott and other liberals of the day "can put what they like into their books and say what they like in their sermons." However, he significantly added, "Let a candidate present himself for ordination with The Kernel and the Husk for his text-book, and what bishop will ordain him?"<sup>1</sup> Not only were his works discounted, for the most part they went unexamined. As one scholar notes, "(Abbott's) work has not been recognised. Scholars have not taken to it; the public has not heard of it". He added, "We wish our New Testament scholars who are also scholars of Hebrew, and who have leisure, would lay aside their inconvenient modesty and deal with this book (From Letter to Spirit) on its merits."<sup>2</sup>

In this thesis we have seen that scholars made comments in their books about some aspects of his works. However, an estimate of his writings as a whole has never been made. Because of this, reviews of his works in periodicals and newspapers are our primary source for comments on his thought. Since these usually deal with only one of Abbott's books, they are written often from a limited perspective. Especially is this true because of the connexion between Abbott's theology, criticism, and philosophy.

The reviews of his works fall into three main categories. (1) Those that deal with single points out of the many that Abbott made in his 'Inductions'; (2) those that give an incorrect estimate of his works;

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas C. Snow, "Liberal Theology in the Church", Contemporary Review, Vol. LXI, p. 107.  
<sup>2</sup>Review of From Letter to Spirit, Expository Times, Vol. XIV, p. 539.

(3) those that correctly understand his line of reasoning as a whole. This last group draws attention to such things as the new meanings he gives to old words, the hypothetical and conjectural nature of his work, and his inconsistencies.

An example of the first category is found in a review of The Fourfold Gospel, Part IV, where the weakness of various points in Abbott's works is brought out. The reviewer observed that ". . . a serious confusion is introduced by connecting the 'tormenting', 'the grieving of Peter' by the lake-side in St. John xxi, unless composite authorship of the Fourth Gospel is assumed."<sup>1</sup> He further declared ". . . it is hard to believe that any symbolic intention, suggestive of 'peace', underlies St. Mark's 'shod with sandals' or that ὁ σταυρός in 'Take up his cross' of St. Mark 8:43 . . . referred originally to the cross-bar of the yoke."<sup>2</sup> Such comments point out the extremely conjectural nature of the many minor points that made up Abbott's 'induction'. Another good example of this type of review is given by F. C. Burkitt on the subjects of 'Lifting Up' and 'Exalting'. In both of these terms Abbott found recondite meaning.<sup>3</sup> Under the category (2) above should be placed a review of The Fourfold Gospel, Part IV, in which the comment was made, "His (Abbott's) object everywhere is interpretation, not destruction. . . . (he) suggests interpretations which are wholly different from those commonly accepted."<sup>4</sup> His works on the fourfold Gospel were destructive

<sup>1</sup>Review of Fourfold Gospel IV, American Journal of Theology, October 1916, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 406f.

<sup>3</sup>F. C. Burkitt, "On 'Lifting Up', and on 'Exalting'", The Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. XX, pp. 336 - 338.

<sup>4</sup>Yorkshire Post, 26 - 4 - 16.



of the history not only of John but of the Synoptics as well. His works taken as a whole often destroy rather than interpret, and as we have noted, his announced aim was to destroy and partially conserve. Another review on The Fourfold Gospel, Part II, stated

. . . the distinguishing feature of his method is that he represents John deliberately intervening with confirmatory evidence in support of Mark where the statements of the latter have been altered or omitted by Luke and occasionally by Matthew. This marks a decided departure from the author's earlier critical position in the Encyclopaedia Biblica and elsewhere on the subject of the Fourth Gospel. He still holds that John was a poet and a mystic rather than a historian, but now confesses that closer study has convinced him that even in the 'spiritual Gospel' the interests of history are kept in view . . ."<sup>A</sup>

This estimate might be inferred from Abbott's summary statements in this book<sup>1</sup> but it does not reckon with Abbott's singular use of words. An examination of all his works reveals that he attached peculiar meanings to words. His works on the fourfold gospel indicate that he greatly trusted in John's 'spiritual' history. He also came to the conclusion that we will never know the words and history of Jesus of Nazareth. We have shown that Abbott's general statements about his thought should be closely examined in the light of his exposition of his thought. Where we did this we found that many of his summations were misleading.

In category (3) the majority of the reviews support our thesis on Abbott. On 'Johannine intervention' one scholar remarked: "With such conjectural and critical rules, it would seem that almost anything might be deduced from anything, and consequently this thesis of Dr. Abbott's

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<sup>A</sup>Review of Fourfold II, Glasgow Herald 3 March 1914.

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller discussion of this point see the chapter "Abbott As Johannine Scholar".

fails to carry conviction."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most trenchant criticism of Abbott's earlier work was A. B. Bruce's article entitled "An Eccentric Apologist", a review of Through Nature to Christ and Philochristus, which appeared in the Evangelical Review. On Abbott's criticism of the New Testament Bruce commented,

Dr. Abbott is a writer whom it would be impossible to classify. Going the whole length of rationalistic criticism as far as the Gospel narrative of events is concerned, he is yet a devout believer in the divine nature of Christ, and evidently writes with the intention of making Christianity easy for modern thinkers.<sup>2</sup>

Bruce rightly drew attention to the difficult problem of classifying Abbott and the singular character of his apologetics. Also, in a perceptive way he called attention to the promise and danger of Abbott's apologetics. He stated that Abbott,

May very possibly be instrumental in raising some of his readers from lower levels of belief or unbelief - we are honestly at a loss to say which word to use - at all events, in saving them from sinking into the contemptuous disbelief now so commonly professed by the indifferent. But the peculiarity which distinguishes his writing is the unusual combination of rationalistic criticism with enthusiastic faith in Christ as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. . . . we do not believe one who had to make acquaintance with Christ on the natural lines only could attain to such faith as Abbott claims . . .<sup>3</sup>

We have maintained that Abbott's works might possibly have guided unbelievers toward Christian faith. We also pointed out that his doctrine would probably not satisfy one's intellectual needs for long.

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<sup>1</sup>Review of Fourfold 1 and II, American Journal of Theology, April 1915.

<sup>2</sup>A. B. Bruce, "An Eccentric Apologist", Evangelical Review, Vol. xxvii, p. 778f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 771.

Also, Marcus Dods observed: "Abbott is weak on Christ's unique sinlessness<sup>1</sup> and character, a fatally weak point", and that Abbott's theology demoted<sup>2</sup> the Father to a "remote personality".

These criticisms show that the scholars of his day recognised the danger to the Christian faith of Abbott's peculiar apologetic. In so doing they support our thesis on Abbott. Abbott's contemporaries generally opposed his theology. Theological thought since Abbot's day has shown even more clearly what was lasting in his thought. That which has been termed "the principle of liberalism is now accepted." This principle has been described as one of the ideals a church should strive to obtain. In Richardson's words,

It will present that ideal of intellectual sincerity which is essential to religious purity; it will signify the spirit of adventure in the realm of spiritual experience comparable to that which the true scientist knows in his own sphere; it will designate the pursuit to which every Christian should be pledged - to serve God with all his mind."<sup>3</sup>

It was not this principle alone that Abbott claimed to be passing on to the next generation. Rather he believed the doctrines he proclaimed would be the belief of our time. They are not. Instead, his thought has been found wanting at its essential points. On this matter Richardson wrote,

. . . the historical conclusions and scientific attitudes of that period (the nineteenth century) were merely transitory and have been entirely replaced today, and the 'naturalistic' religion of the liberal protestants is dead as the naturalistic science of the 'nineties. While philosophers like James Ward were hammering nails into the coffin of

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<sup>1</sup>Marcus Dods, Review of The Spirit On the Waters, "The Critical Review, Vol. vii, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Richardson, The Redemption of Modernism, p. 14.

the old naturalism, while Bergson and William James were feeling their way towards new philosophies of life, in the sphere of New Testament criticism theologians like Schweitzer and Loisy were demonstrating the weaknesses of liberal protestantism. No sooner had that view attained its widest popularity than the theologians began to move on to a new position. The decline of liberal protestantism had begun by the opening years of the present century, but its real death-blow was struck by the course of events quite outside the field of theology which issued in the upheaval of the Great War.<sup>1</sup>

If God is the Order of the world, a disruption of that order resulting in world-wide war is enough to create searching questions. As one scholar put it: "Can the hatreds, the brutality, the bestiality, and the devilish ingenuity in inventing new weapons and methods of torture, be regarded as manifestations of the immanent God?" This question forced itself not only on the opponents of liberalism but upon the liberals themselves. One who was a liberal in the 'twenties spoke of the 'decline of liberalism'<sup>3</sup> that was taking place in 1933 and took seriously the question, 'After liberalism what?'<sup>4</sup> Speaking of a colleague who continued to embrace the old liberalism Horton disclosed:

. . . I think he is still accepting, uncriticized, a set of assumptions about 'nature' as a self-contained, self-explanatory sphere, which were hastily and falsely made, as generalizations from current scientific knowledge in an age when pure science enjoyed an exaggerated prestige. That God works in nature, I grant, but not that he is a mere part of or process in nature.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>L. Berkhof, Aspects of Liberalism, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>W. M. Horton, Realistic Theology, Theology in Transition, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>W. M. Horton, A Psychological Approach to Theology, p. ix.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. xviii.

Here, in the generation after Abbott, is one whose outlook closely paralleled Abbott's at one time in his theological career. Yet, instead of retaining and developing Abbott's thought he did not even accept its central contentions.

Changes that parallel these alterations in the conception of God have also come in Biblical studies. When Abbott attended St. John's College he found that little criticism of the Gospels had been carried out in Great Britain. The manner in which Abbott read his own ideas into the Gospel text indicates that in his day Biblical criticism was in its infancy. In the search for the earliest message of the church we have learned the importance of the evidence provided by the New Testament as a whole, especially that of the Acts and the Epistles - sources which Abbott failed to consult in his theories. C. H. Dodd found the "primitive preaching" in the Pauline epistles and Acts as well as in the Gospels. He declared, ". . . anyone who should maintain that the primitive Christian Gospel was fundamentally different from that which we have found in Paul must bear the burden of proof."<sup>1</sup> Even Bultmann, who seeks for a kernel of truth embedded in the New Testament record, criticised the liberals of the past who trusted in a different kernel. In his view, "The liberal theologians of the last century were working on the wrong lines. They threw away not only the mythology but also the kerygma itself."<sup>2</sup> He rightly criticises their destruction of the text.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Development, p. 16. The two main sources for the reconstruction of the kerygma "or message of salvation" are the speeches of Peter in Acts 1-10 and pertinent Pauline passages (A.M. Hunter) Introducing New Testament Theology, op. cit. p. 63f.

<sup>2</sup>R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", Kerygma and Myth, H.W. Bartsch, Ed., Trans. R. H. Fuller, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The criticisms of the older liberals by present-day scholars indicate that there has been a movement away from Abbott's naturalistic theology and radical criticism. This confirms our conclusions on Abbott.

Subsequent development in Biblical studies supports our view that the Gospels were not written with Abbott's presuppositions. This is true of the oldest strata of the Gospels and of the later strata. As Richardson put it, "What is probably our oldest documentary source reveals that Jesus Himself claimed to have healed the blind, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf, and to have raised the dead (Q, Matt. xi.5, Luke vii.22)."<sup>1</sup>

Abbott's original Gospel never saw the light of day; it was an extraction from the canonical Gospels. But even if it had existed, it would have given an inadequate 'Gospel' for Christian faith. D. M. Baillie rightly asserted that the "actual portrait of the historical Jesus" is "indispensable" in connecting the Christian claim to Jesus' divine significance "firmly with historical reality".<sup>2</sup> Along this same line C. H. Dodd commented,

Some religions can be indifferent to historical fact, and move entirely upon the plane of timeless truth. Christianity cannot. It rests upon the affirmation that a series of events happened, in which God revealed Himself in action, for the salvation of men.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian world could hardly be content with Abbott's Gospel that was mainly a record of the activities of the Spirit in the early church. The importance of the account of Jesus' earthly ministry for Christian faith

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<sup>1</sup>Alan Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>D. M. Baillie, *God was in Christ*, op. cit., p. 52

<sup>3</sup>C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel*, op. cit., p. 15.



is evidenced by the fact that the quest for the historical Jesus is still going on to-day.

The movements in scholarship in modern times has corrected Abbott on major points. We have also shown that it has benefited by his labours and has confirmed the positive contributions he made.

The subsequent criticism and revision of Abbott's nineteenth century liberalism help us to gain a perspective of Abbott and to determine his place in the history of Christian thought. It is among those who have rewritten the Bible, taking part of it and discarding the rest. Abbott had the worthy and correct aim of making progress in theological thought. However, lasting advances must have a firm basis. They also should be credible to succeeding generations. Many of Abbott's advances failed to make lasting 'progress' because they lacked these qualities. Abbott's mechanical aids to Bible study and the removal of the dictates of scholasticism on such subjects as the Atonement were more genuine contributions than were such conjectures as the 'triple tradition'. Also, the criticism of the credulity of his time and his warning against superstition as proclaimed by Newman were steps in the direction toward true progress. However, his insistence upon the necessity of destroying in order to grow, when the destruction was in the interest of his philosophy, kept him from making the lasting progress in Bible study that he was capable of making.

The subsequent criticism and revision of nineteenth century liberalism confirms our insistence that Abbott's line of reasoning, his extreme subjectivism, and his demand for destruction of the existing Biblical text so as to separate the kernel from the husk, greatly minimise the lasting contributions of his works. These things also place him among those who, through the Christian centuries, have rewritten the Bible,



taking part of it and discarding the rest.

Abbott labeled his later works Diatesserica. This title is instructive. It recalls Tatian's Diatessaron, a harmony of the Gospel made in the interest of Gnosticism, which assimilated the Gospels to St. Matthew, omitting much of John and Luke. Centuries ago Marcion rewrote the Gospels, using a criticism "with a knife", as Tertullian described it.<sup>1</sup> We have seen that Abbott carried out a similar practice which was described as a 'scissors and paste' criticism. Abbott endeavoured to find an Original Gospel that was a non-supernatural Gospel and to discount as accretion what was left. As Marcion and Tatian earlier proposed a substitute text for the Gospels found in the New Testament, Abbott also attempted to extract a non-supernatural Gospel for the nineteenth century. Instead of being the Original Gospel it was Abbott's gospel, the limitations of which were dictated by his philosophy.

In this thesis we have found it necessary to criticise Abbott on many points. However, as the work advanced respect for Abbott grew instead of decreasing. More and more we realised that Abbott is exemplary in many ways - his indefatigable labours and his efficiency which enabled him to publish many works, his courage as a purveyor of new ideas, his approach to faith which took into account the advancements in science, his attention to minute detail, and his desire to win doubters to Christianity. In all these things, and in many others which his works reveal, he is to be commended. Also, in Abbott we have an important member of the Broad Church School. Through his works we learn how one member of this school sought to influence the thinking of his times.

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<sup>1</sup>E. C. Blackman, Marcion and His Influence, p. 42.

Furthermore, among his numerous hypotheses there were some that anticipated the teachings of scholars of a later day. There is much we can learn from Abbott, not only from his errors but from his lasting contributions as well. We have attempted to delineate both of these aspects of Abbott's thought.

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#### E. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Abbott, Edwin Abbott. Papers (Selected for preservation by J. M. Creed, May 1927) in the Cambridge Treasury. These are available at St. John's College Library, Cambridge:

\_\_\_\_\_ "Additions to Bruder" a classification of grammatical peculiarities in the LXX.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Commentary on Gospel According to St. John."

\_\_\_\_\_ "Commentary on Pauline Epistles".

\_\_\_\_\_ "Errors of LXX in Reading Hebrew Words, Arranged According to the Greek Alphabet."

\_\_\_\_\_ "Errors of Translation Chiefly from Hebrew by LXX  
Collected Under Heads."

\_\_\_\_\_ "Eucharistic" An Examination of the New Testament and  
other early Christian texts bearing on the Eucharist.

\_\_\_\_\_ Five papers: "St. Paul's Use of Word *ὁσως* ."  
"Aphorisms on Miracles."  
"Influence of Apocrypha on Writers of New Testament."  
"St. Paul's Speeches Reported in Acts."  
"The Resurrection of Christ."

\_\_\_\_\_ "Index of Prepositions and Particles Used in LXX with their  
constructions."

\_\_\_\_\_ Letters from James Martineau, I Abrahams, and Fred Field.

\_\_\_\_\_ Letters to E. B. Mayor and E. Atkinson.

\_\_\_\_\_ Miscellaneous papers chiefly bearing on the Odes of Solomon.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Notes on the Origin of the LXX."

\_\_\_\_\_ Two papers: 1) "On Growth of Logos Doctrine"  
2) "On Pause-spaces in B Text of St. John's Gospel."